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OLD HONESTY;

OR,

THE GUESTS OF THE BEEHALL TAVERN.

A TALE OF THE EARLY DAYS OF KENTUCKY.

BY EDWARD WILLETT,

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLOWING DIME NOVELS:

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OLD HONESTY.

CHAPTER I.

THE PROMISED LAND.

It was near the close of the eighteenth century. We are not going to be particular about the precise date, as no date is given by the tradition (yet unwritten) on which this narrative is founded, and as we are disposed to prune, rather than to enlarge the traditional account. We know, however, from the circumstances related, that it must have been near the close of the eighteenth century.

It was in the early part of autumn, also, that season which, so beautiful and pleasant every where, is eminently so in some of our Western States.

It was in the early part of autumn, we say, because the tradition relates that the leaves of the forests were beginning to turn red and brown, the nuts were falling from the trees, and the fat gray squirrels were gayly frisking among the boughs, as a party of travelers—or “movers,” as they were frequently called—reached the crest of a hill that overlooked one of the fairest views in the beautiful State of Kentucky.

Before them stretched out a broad and rolling prairie plain, thickly covered with the richest grass, and dotted, here and there, with the loveliest clumps of trees. Beyond the plain lay a noble forest, and beyond the forest pleasant glimpses could be caught of the placid and shining waters of the Ohio.

Our travelers were few in number—too few for safety, considering the numerous and warlike bands of hostile Indians, who roamed through the country by thousands, and who were continually on the watch to waylay and murder the emigrants from Virginia to Kentucky. The male portion of the party consisted of Matthew Jaffray, and his three sons—called

respectively, Mark, Luke, and John—a young man who was known as Herbert Holston, and a stout Irishman, Terrence Finnerty by name, who had been for some time in the employ of old Matthew Jaffray. The female portion were Martha Boyd, a widowed sister of old Matthew, and her daughter Mary, a beautiful and high-spirited girl of eighteen. They had no teams, with the exception of a stout covered wagon, which served to convey the “women folks,” and which showed marks of hard usage, as it had been forced for many miles through the unbroken wilderness. The men were well mounted, and their baggage and other “plunder” was carried on pack-horses.

Few as they were they had journeyed all that distance in safety, and without any peril, except a few “skrimmages” with small parties of Indians, in which they had always come off victorious and comparatively unharmed. Matthew Jaffray—doubtless with good reason—attributed their preservation and remarkable good fortune to the special interposition of Providence, secured through the prayers which he did not fail, daily and nightly, to offer up. All agreed that they had been marvelously cared for, and all were thankful for the kind protection which had been vouchsafed to them.

The old man, who was riding in advance with his eldest son, halted on the brow of the hill, raised his hat, shaded his eyes with his hands from the rays of the declining sun, and gazed upon the scene with feelings of unmixed admiration.

“Son Mark,” said he, “surely the Lord God who led the children up out of Egypt has brought us to this place. We have been mercifully preserved through much tribulation, and have reached the promised land at last.”

“You say truly father,” answered Mark, a stalwart and manly young man, who revered his father above every thing else on earth, and who believed in him implicitly. “You say truly, father; we have great reason to be thankful, for our path has been beset by dangers, and in truth my eyes have never rested upon a fairer scene than this. I must bring my aunt and cousin to share with us the beauty of the prospect.”

But Martha Boyd and her daughter had already been extricated from their vehicle, by the prompt assistance of

Herbert Holston and John Jaffray, and were hastening forward to the edge of the slope.

Holston was tall and finely formed, with a face and eyes that seemed fitted for a commander. John Jaffray was a lithe and active young fellow of about nineteen.

"Look at that, sister Martha," said the old man, stretching his hand toward the prospect. "Is not this a country that was framed by God for the abode of His chosen creatures?"

"You say truly, father," echoed Mark. "It is too good for the habitation of savages and wild beasts, and I have no doubt that it has been ordained that we should occupy and possess it."

"What a splendid pasture for cattle!" said Luke; "what herds we might raise, if we could only get them!"

"It looks to me," said John, "as if it ought to be the finest hunting-ground in the world. Don't you think so, Mr. Holston?"

"It is beautiful exceedingly," remarked the widow, "and it may prove a pleasant and desirable abiding place, if we can possess it peaceably.

"What a glorious view!" was Mary Boyd's comment. "How I wish I could paint it! What lovely clumps of trees are three scattered upon the plain! How finely the view is closed in by that dark forest! And see, Mr. Holston, is not that a river that is shining between the trees, yonder toward the hills? Yes, it is! Let us hasten forward and reach the beautiful river!"

Holston did not answer this enthusiastic speech, but stood like a statue, leaning on his rifle, with his dark eyes fixed on the distance, and his fine features shaded by a gloomy frown.

"What is the matter, friend Holston?" inquired the old man. "You look as solemn as if you had seen a spirit, instead of a fair and fertile land. Do you descry any danger in the distance, that you gaze at it so steadily and so gloomily?"

"I see no indications of danger, sir," answered the young man. "I was looking at the river yonder, the sight of which always brings to me the most painful memories, for the last of my family, except myself, were lost upon it."

"What do you mean, Mr. Holston?" eagerly asked the widow. "How did it occur? Why have you never spoken to us of your family before?"

"Simply because I had none—none in this country, at least, and none elsewhere, to my knowledge. My father was a British officer of some rank, who was sent down that river at the commencement of the war, to examine a certain portion of the country, and also, it must be confessed, for the purpose of inciting the Indians against the Americans. He took what was supposed to be a sufficient escort, and with him went my mother, who was a very daring and adventurous woman, and my baby sister. None of the party were ever heard from again, and it was supposed that they had been entrapped and slaughtered by the Indians. It was considered certain, in fact, that they had been betrayed by their guide. You now know why I am saddened by the sight of that river."

"It is no wonder that you are; but why have you never spoken of this before?"

"Because I feared that you might be prejudiced against the son of a British officer, and because I did not wish to revive such bitter remembrances."

"It is a sad story," said the old man; "but your father's death was manifestly an act of Providence, to avert disaster from a people who were struggling for freedom."

"The officer was only discharging his duty," interrupted the widow.

"His duty to man, perhaps, not his duty to God; but this is a profitless and unpleasant discussion, sister. Let us not continue it; let us, rather, unite in returning thanks to that merciful Being who has led us safely through the wilderness, who has preserved us from all savage foes, and who has brought us to this beautiful land of promise."

All knelt upon the ground, and the old man proceeded to offer up a prayer of thankfulness, of which the only fault was, perhaps, its length.

"Come, now," he said, as he rose and mounted his horse. "The sun is setting, and we must hasten forward, to find a suitable location in the valley, before the night comes upon us."

The men mounted their horses, the women entered their vehicle, and the cavalcade wound slowly down the slope, over the grassy and rolling plain, and among the beautiful clumps of trees, toward the not far distant river, until they reached a pleasant and shaded spot, on the banks of a small stream that flowed into the Ohio.

"We could not ask for a better location than this," said the old man, as he glanced about at the surroundings. "Here are good wood and water, and, if I am not mistaken, the place has been occupied before."

"It has, indeed, father," said John Jaffray, who had been making a small circuit around the grove.

"I have just seen the stump of a sapling, that was cut down not long ago, and here is another."

"And here," said Holston, "are marks of fire, at the root of this oak."

"And indade," exclaimed Terrence, "it's cookin' that's been done here, for I've found the skins of the pertaties!"

"You are all right," said Mr. Jaffray. "There are unmistakable signs that a camp has been made here, but I do not think it has been an Indian camp. At all events, we can afford to trust to that Providence which has protected us thus far. Unload the horses, boys; and you, Terry, get some sticks and start a fire."

The others immediately proceeded to obey his orders, but they had hardly commenced to unpack, when they were startled by a greeting from a voice which evidently did not belong to any of their party:

"I say, strangers!"

CHAPTER II.

OLD HONESTY.

THE new-comer was a man considerably past the middle age of life, though he looked probably older than he really was, for his hair and beard were long and nearly gray, and his features were shaded by a rough old hat, with a wide brim

His face was full and puffy, and the end of his bulbous nose shone like a ripe cherry. His eyes were small and twinkling, and in the corners of his mouth there was a continual chuckle, which never suffered itself to grow into a laugh. His figure was short, fat, and inclined to be chunky—to use an inelegant but expressive word. He was dressed in a rough sort of greatcoat, an old red vest, buckskin small-clothes, and gaiters. He seemed to have no weapon, except a stout stick, which he used as a cane. His voice was of a peculiar wheezing huskiness, which was quite unpleasant when first heard.

“I say, strangers!”

All turned to look at this singular being, who had so unexpectedly appeared among them.

“I say, strangers! I spect likely you’re lookin’ for a camp-in’-place.”

“We were, but we have found one,” quietly answered Matthew Jaffray.

“Ya-as, I see. Nice place, this, but thar’s better to be found about here.”

“Do you live in this part of the country, sir?”

“Reckon I do. I’ve lived here so long that I e’ena’most forgit when I come—though that ain’t precizely a fact, you know, and I’m allers keerful to speak the truth.”

“We had not expected to find any settlers here. Are there many besides yourself?”

“Nobody but me and my folks. Come down to my tarvern, and you’ll see.”

“Your tavern! It is not possible that there is a tavern in this wilderness.”

“Thar you ketch yourself speakin’ agin’ the truth, stranger—a thing that I’m allers keerful not to do, myself.”

“God forbid that I should speak falsely! Is there really a tavern near this spot?”

“Thar raaly is, as I ort to know, bein’ as I keep it myself. Thar can’t be any doubtin’, I reckon, that the Beehalt Tarvern is purty much the oldest in this part of the kentry.”

“The what?”

“The Beehalt Tarvern. Sounds kinder strange to you, I s’pose. P’raps I mought as well tell how I come to give it that name. You’ve heerd, I reckon, that the bees are bound

to foller the white men. No matter how fur the settlers go to the west'ard, and cut down the timber, and clear up the land, the bees are sure to chase 'em up and settle thar, too. Whether you've heard tell of it or not, it's jist so. Wal, the white men passed on beyond here, and cleared up settlements here and thar, and the bees, in coorse, follered on right arter 'em. *But*—and this is the queer thing about it, stranger—when the bees reached this here place, they thort it was jist the most loveliest spot that they ever stuck their noses into, and it was so enticin' to 'em, that they jist stayed here, a long, long time, afore they took up the trail again, and started on to the west'ard. It was from that very suckimstance, stranger, that I giv' my tarvern the name of the Beehalt, 'cause the bees halt-ed here sich a long while. And thar's lots of those bees stayin' around here yet, stranger—or thar children—that couldn't ever be got to leave this beeyouchiful place."

"As you are always careful to speak the truth," said Matthew Jaffray, "I would not attempt to doubt the statement you have made, although it seems a strange one to me. It appears to me that the bees could find no fairer spot in which to halt, than this is, and I commend them for their judgment. But, sir, this is an unfrequented place, far from the paths of civilized men, and I am curious to know why you set up a tavern here, and whom you expect to entertain."

"I jist started it fur the future—don't you see?—knowin' what a lovely spot it was. I spected to take skeer of any strangers that mought happen along, like yourselves, f'rinstance. Ef you'll move on down to my place, you'll find it a heap nicer'n this here."

"We all thank you for your offer, but we have not come into this wilderness with the purpose of putting up at taverns. If you, sir, will tarry with us a while, and will partake of our homely fares, you will be welcome to do so."

"Wal, I reckon I may as well, bein's we are sorter neighbors, and as you won't come to my house. I'll take a seat on this here log, ef you don't object."

"Finish your unloading, boys. Hasten the fire, Terry, and let us have something to eat as soon as possible, for our bodies must be sustained, in order that our spirits may be in proper frame."

The young men proceeded to unloose the packs, the Irish man bustled about in preparations for the evening meal, and Matthew Jaffray resumed his conversation with the strange intruder.

"I presume, sir," said he, "although you are our guest, that it will be no discourtesy to inquire your name."

"That's a long way of gittin' at it, stranger; but I reckon you are askin' my name. I've no doubt you've heerd of me a hundred times, fur I'm called Silas Wagg."

"I must confess," calmly replied Matthew, "that I never heard the name before."

"Wal, whar on airth did you all come from?" asked the backwoods landlord, with a peculiar leer.

"We are from Virginia—from the James River country."

"Wal, now, that's queer. I've seen heaps of you Virginny people—Jeems River folks in particklar—and you orter knowed me. I've took good keer of 'em, whenever they come along here. They allers call me Old Honesty, and I'm more ginerally called that than I'm called Silas Wagg. P'r'aps you moight know me by that name."

"Neither did I ever hear of you by that name. It is an honorable title, and I trust that you deserve it."

"You needn't take nothin' of that kind on trust, stranger, fur I know that I deserve it. It ain't me that says so, but I'm told so by heaps of people. Every body calls me Old Honesty—Injuns as well as white folks. Would you like to know how I got that name, stranger?"

"If you deserve it, it is easy to understand how you got it."

"You're right about that. Ef I didn't deserve it, I wouldn't nave it, in coorse. The way they come to give it to me, I s'pose, was this: In the fust place, I'm allers keerful to speak the truth, and never dodge it, in no manner of ways—never go over it, never go under it, never sneak around it. Second-ly, I allers do the fa'r thing by man and beast, of whatsoever name, color or natur'. Ag'in, it's well known that I'd rather give a man a hoss than steal one from him. Thar's other p'int, no doubt, that made people give me that name, but I never keered fur to hunt 'em up."

"I am glad to hear that you have such a good character

riend Wagg. It is truly refreshing to find an honest white man, in a region that is full of thieving and murdering savages. But our meal is ready, and we will, if you please, sit down and partake of the blessings that Providence has provided."

Silas Wagg, nothing loth, seated himself on the ground with the rest, and opened his eyes a little wide as he listened to Matthew Jaffray's long "grace." If it is true that to the righteous belong the good things of the earth, our backwoods landlord surely proved himself to be one of the righteous, for he established his claim to such a large portion of the supper that the others could not help staring. He ate, in fact, so voraciously, that Matthew Jaffray saw it would be useless to expect him to speak until he finished eating. When he was gorged, and had laid down his knife, the old man recommenced his interrogations.

"Are you not sometimes molested by the Indians, friend Wagg?"

"Never a bit of it. The Injuns never trouble me, nor any of my friends."

"That is strange. You must have established excellent relations with them."

"Anan? I hain't got any relations among 'em, as I knows of."

"I mean that you must be on good terms with them. How does it happen that they are so peaceable toward you?"

"The fact of thar peaceability, stranger, jest comes from my bein' what I am, and what I am called, and that is, Old Honesty. I've allers treated 'em fairly, jist as I do every man and beast, as I said afore. I never tell 'em any thing but the plain and squar' truth, and that's why they take a likin' to me. Of all those Injuns that come from over the river, and piroute around through Kaintucky, a-horse-stealin' and a-killin', thar's not one that ever comes anigh my place, onless he's tired, or hungry, or thirsty, or wants to hev a talk with me."

"I have heard that the most savage tribes will respect those white men who treat them well, and will allow such to live among them in peace."

"That's jest so, stranger, and you see the proof of it in me. Ef you mean to settle down in Kaintucky, you won't

find a more lovelier spot than this, nor a safer spot than near whar Silas Wagg heeps the Beehalt Tarvern. Will you come down to my place in the mornin', and take a look at it?"

"As I answer for all," said Matthew Jaffray, "I say that we will do so, if you will visit us in the morning, and will act as our guide."

"In coorse I will. I'll be here right 'arly, and will take you down. Good-night, strangers all. I must go and look arter the folks at the tarvern."

So saying, the grotesque visitor took his stick, and slowly walked away toward the river, leaving his entertainers to their conjectures and reflections.

"It is indeed a strange thing," said Matthew Jaffray, "to find such a man in this wilderness—living alone, and yet endeared alike to whites and to Indians."

"You say truly, father," echoed Mark. "It is passing strange to find an honest man where we had expected to see none but thieving savages, and we may well bless the hand that led us to this spot."

"He must be a smart man, to keep on the right side of the red-skins, and we might make it profitable to stay by him," said matter-of-fact Luke.

"He's an out-of-the-way fellow, but such are found in out-of-the-way places," remarked John.

"He's an eye to the atin', and not a blessed petaty did he lave in the pot!" exclaimed Terry Finnerty.

"He is one of the funniest beings I ever saw," observed Mary Boyd. "What do you think of him, Mr. Holston?"

"I think," replied that young gentleman, "that you all need sleep, and that Johnny and I will guard the camp to-night."

Holston's advice—if it was meant for advice—was taken, and the party, with the exception of the self-appointed sentinels, sought repose.

CHAPTER III.

THE BEEHALT TAVERN—A BARGAIN.

TRUE to his promise, at a very early hour in the morning Silas Wagg visited the spot where our travelers had encamped. He found them waiting for him, the horses being packed, the women's vehicle prepared, and every thing ready for a move. He greeted his new friends with a hearty salutation.

"Mornin' to you, strangers all! I'm on hand, you see, 'arly in the mornin', jest as I promised. But you are all packed up, and ready for a start. Did you think I was goin' to break my word, and leave you to go without me?"

"We had no such fear," said Matthew Jaffray. "We were waiting for you."

"Jest as I thort. You knew well that Old Honesty wasn't goin' to speak nothin' but the truth. Never saw a man yet who doubted my word, arter he found out who and what I was. That's the way I got the name of Old Honesty, and I'm bound to admit that I feel sorter proud of it."

"You may well be proud of it, for it is the best title, next to that of a Christian, that a man can wear. Lead the way, friend Wagg, and we will follow you."

"Come 'on, strangers all. You hain't got fur to go, though it don't look as ef thar was a settlement about here."

Leaving the stream by which they had camped, the party followed their strange guide over the prairie, to the belt of timber beyond, where the tall trees were so far apart that the wagon passed through without much difficulty. Beyond the timber was a level plain, about a furlong in breadth, and beyond that could be seen the river, its banks lined with young willows and bushes. Still, there was no appearance of cultivation, no sign of industry of the white man.

"P'raps you're doubtin' whether thar's any tarvern here arter all," said Old Honesty, who had been keeping up an animated conversation during the journey. "Reckon you

hain't, though, fur you wouldn't be apt to misbelieve old Silas Wagg, arter-knowin' what he is. Never mind the looks of things, but trust to the word of an honest man, and you'll come out all right."

No one objecting, he continued to lead the way. Turning to the right, he came to a stream, the same which the travelers had left that morning. Forging this with some difficulty, they passed down its bank a short distance, until they reached a rocky hill, which they had not previously noticed in their surveys of the landscape. It was a grotesque and unnatural-looking hill, especially unnatural because it seemed so strangely out of place in the locality which it occupied, although the hights on the opposite side of the river towered up like palisades. (Since the period of which we write, although a thriving village lies near it, and civilization has shorn it of much of its grotesqueness, the hill attracts the attention of strangers and tourists, on account of its apparent unnatural location.)

The travelers had not ceased to express their wonder at the hill—for they had not noticed it until they "rose the bank" of the stream—when, as they suddenly turned a clump of thick trees, their guide called a halt, placed himself in an attitude which was more expressive than graceful, and pointed to the hill before him.

"Thar, strangers all!" he exclaimed. "Thar is the Bee-halt Tarvern, and you're welcome to it, as all strangers are."

All looked in the direction that was pointed out to them, but they strained their eyes for some time, before they could make out where and what that ancient and honorable hostelry really was.

Against the almost perpendicular rock which formed one side of the hill, was erected a rude but strong structure of logs. It was not larger at the base than an ordinary log-cabin, but it was quite a spacious and commodious establishment, for it could boast of being three stories in hight, showing that it had been built to serve as a block-house, as well as a habitation. It was so situated that it could not be seen, except upon a near approach, and was so shut in and embowered by trees and vines, that even then it was not easy to distinguish it.

"You have selected a strange and most romantic location," said Holston, for the first time addressing himself to the guide. "It is easy to perceive that you intended that building for a block-house."

"A what?" exclaimed Old Honesty, with a suspicious glance at Holston. "What use would a peaceable man like me have for a block-house? You ort to be keeful, young man, how you speak ag'in the truth. I say it was built fur a tarvern, and nobody who knows Silas Wagg would think of disputin' his word."

"There need be no dispute on the subject, and none of us purpose to make any," said Matthew Jaffray. "We have come to visit you, friend Wagg, as you requested, and now, with your permission, we will unpack our animals, and will camp here for the present."

"Adzackly so, stranger. You couldn't please old Silas Wagg better than by makin' yourselves to hum. And now, bein's I'm kinder tired of callin' you stranger, what mought your name be?"

"I am called Mathew Jaffray. In my own country I am known as Deacon Jaffray. These boys are my sons—Mark, Luke and John. The young man yonder is Mr. Holston, who is traveling with us. The other is my servant, and he is named Terry."

"But who are these?" asked Wagg, sidling up toward the women, who had just alighted from their vehicle. "You hain't spoke of the best pick of the lot, friend Jaffray."

"One is my sister, Mrs. Boyd," calmly replied the old man, "and the other is her daughter, named Mary."

"And a mighty pretty girl she is too," said Wagg, who seemed to wish to devour the fair creature with his glances. "I would'nt have thort that sech a nice gal could be picked up on this airth. I say, my dear, I reckon you'll like old Uncle Silas, and will be his pussy—won't you, eh?"

As Mary's cheek turned to crimson at these words, he raised his hand, as if to chuck her under the chin, when his wrist was suddenly seized, with a grip that made him wince, and his arm was jerked up.

"We are from Virginia, and we allow no such liberties with our maidens," said the cool and stern voice of Herbert Holston.

For an instant the face of the backwoods landlord was white, and his small eyes emitted a baleful gleam that spoke of rage, if not of a worse emotion; but his expression as quickly changed back to its former good humored phase, and he said, in a mild but husky voice,

"You don't suppose—do you?—that an old man like me, and a man with a family, would mean any harm by speakin' kind to a purty gal? Hope you didn't think I was goin' to hurt her."

Holston's manner changed quite as quickly as that of the other, and he slapped him pleasantly on the back as he answered,

"Nothing of the kind, my dear sir. I make all due allowance for your having lived so many years in the backwoods, and for your being affected by the sight of so much beauty; but we are from Virginia, as I said, and we are particular in such matters. You must pardon me, therefore, if my touch was rather rude and uncivil. By the way, friend Wagg—if you will allow a young man to call you so—are you not going to invite us to enter this tall house of yours—this tavern in the wilderness?"

"In coorse I am, young man. That's what I axed you to come here fur. Jest go inside, and make yourselves to hum. The Beehalt Tarvern is free to all who behave themselves—leastways, so long as Silas Wagg keeps it."

So saying, Old Honesty turned away, and joined Mattlew Jaffray, who claimed his attention, and took him apart, together with his favorite son, Mark.

"You must be aware, friend Wagg," said the old man, "that we have not come into this country for the purpose of dallying about taverns, or on any idle or frivolous business whatsoever."

"My father speaks truly," joined in Mark. "We have journeyed through a vast wilderness and have encountered great perils, wherefrom we have been delivered by the protecting hand of Providence, which has brought us here to claim our portion of this fair and fertile land."

"In fact, friend Wagg," resumed the old man, "we are seeking a location, where we may build up a home, for ourselves and our posterity."

"Whar could you find a better place than this here?" quickly responded Wagg. "To my notion this is jist the most loveliest spot on the face of the airth."

"True, it is fair and pleasant, and, doubtless, the land is fertile, but there are other lands as fair and as fertile, other lands that are not so subject to annoyance from the savages."

"Hain't I told you that you needn't be a bit skeered about Injuns, so long as you are near me? Ef I hain't, I say it now, and you know that I'm always keerful not to go outside of the truth."

"But, as regards the possession of these lands. Do you know whether they have been surveyed, or chartered to any person?"

"They belong to me; I own every foot of land, for miles around here."

"You have a good title, I hope."

"Couldn't be better. I bought it, in fa'r trade, from the Injuns that owned it, and I've got a parchment to show fur it, with the totems of a dozen chiefs writ at the bottom of it. But you needn't bother yourself about that, 'cause I've kinder taken a notion to you folks, and would like just such people to start a settlement here. I'll give you, out and out, a squar' league of land, wharever you want to pick it, and will sell you, e'ena'most on your own terms, as much more as you want to buy. Say yes, and it's a bargain, and you may pick your land and settle on it to-day, ef you want to."

"Truly, father," said Mark, "it seems that our lines have fallen in pleasant places, and that we should accept the offer of this good man."

"I am of the same opinion, my son. It is more than a pleasure to find an honest man in these wilds. It appears to be a special interposition that has brought us hither."

So the bargain, if it may be called a bargain, was consummated, and Matthew Jaffray, accompanied by Mark and Luke—the latter being considered a good "judge of land"—proceeded with Silas Wagg to locate the gift. This was easily done, as they fixed a starting-point on the opposite side of the stream, from which point they were to have a lineal league fronting on the river, forming one side of the square league, the exact lines of which were to be determined by

subsequent surveys and descriptions. Having satisfied themselves in this respect, they rode back to the "Beehalt Tavern."

"Thar's only one thing about you folks that 'pears to me any ways wrong," said Old Honesty, as they were returning "What did you call the name of that young chap who is travelin' with you, as you said?"

"You mean Mr. Holston, I suppose."

"Ya-as, that's the name. A queer sort of chap, who looks at you sometimes as if he wanted to eat you up. Is he any kin to you folks?"

"None at all," answered Matthew Jaffray.

"But I'm inclined to think that he wishes to be," said Mark.

"Just what I was suspectin'. Kinder sweet on that handsome gal, you mean. Do you know who he is, or whar he comes from?"

"We know but little of him," answered the old man, "except that he was living in our neighborhood for a short time, that he appeared to be a man of means and respectability, that he desired to accompany us on our journey, and that we allowed him to do so. It was not until yesterday, that we learned that he was the son of a British officer. That relationship, however, is his misfortune and not his fault."

"That sort of misfortin's, I'm bound to say, bein's I allers stick to the squar truth, is jest the kind I don't like. If a man is born with a notion for stealin' or murderin', it may be his misfortin', but it's sech a misfortin' as people are apt to git punished fur. I must say, speakin' as an honest and fa'r-dealin' man, that I don't like the looks of that chap, and I advise you folks to be mighty keerful what you have to do with him."

"I have been watching him," said Mark, "and I shall continue to do so, for I have had suspicions concerning him for some time."

Matthew Jaffray expressed himself to the same effect. Nevertheless, when they reached the "Beehalt Tavern," the old man explained to Holston and John the nature of the offer which had been so liberally made by Silas Wagg and accepted by himself and Mark, and described the location of the land which he had secured.

"And now," he said in conclusion, "the next thing to do is to get to work and build a log-house for a temporary shelter."

"As you have concluded to remain here," remarked Holston, "I think the most important thing is to go to work and build a fort."

"A fort!" exclaimed Mark and his father at the same time. "Why should we build a fort?"

"To protect ourselves from the Indians."

"A fort, indeed," said Old Honesty, with sneering emphasis. "Do you know what you're talkin' about, young man? Hain't I told you that the Injuns will never bother any of my friends, and ain't these people my friends? I'm mighty keerful allers to speak the squar' truth, young man, and these folks know it. Don't talk to me about a fort, but go to work and build a house to live in."

"I still think," persisted Holston, "that we should build a fort. We should remember that we have lives under our protection that are more precious than our own."

"I reckon your thinkin' more partickler about that handsome gal," said Wagg, with a wink at Mark.

The young man's face flushed, but he made no reply, and Old Honesty, with quite a flourish, invited his guests to enter his three-story log-house.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DUMB GIRL.

WHEN Silas Wagg commenced his business conversation with Matthew Jaffray, Holston, together with Mary Boyd and John Jaffray, and followed by Terry Finnerty, entered the "Beechalt Tavern," in accordance with the invitation of its obliging landlord.

The young man was surprised to see the appearance of comfort that prevailed within this pseudo hostelry. The lower story was built of heavy logs, neatly hewed, and the floor was

also of hewed timber, an unusual luxury in a settler's cabin. And benches were set around the room, a puncheon table stood in the middle, and there was a fire-place at the side that abutted against the rock, with a neat stick-and-plaster chimney to carry off the smoke. On one side there was a rude couch, plentifully covered with blankets and the skins of animals, and in a corner there was a smaller one of the same kind. Around the walls was hung a miscellaneous collection of arms—rifles, muskets, pistols, swords, dirks and tomahawks. A splendid saddle, richly caparisoned, and furnished with holsters, also hung from a pin in the wall. Other articles, equally incongruous, some of them of considerable value, were to be seen among the strange assortment. It seemed as if the owner of the Beehelt Tavern had been endeavoring to found a museum in the wilderness, and the sight of these curiosities caused Holston involuntarily to recur to tales that he had heard and read of piratical haunts in the Spanish main and elsewhere.

The ceiling, which formed the floor of the upper story, was formed of heavy logs, and access could be had to it only through a trap-door, by means of a rude but strong ladder. The door was made of thick oak slabs, doubly and stoutly bolted together.

"Our landlord evidently knows how to make himself comfortable," said Mary Boyd, as she surveyed the room in which they stood.

"He must be some kind of a backwoods prince or ruler," replied Holston. "I am surprised to see some of the articles that are collected here—not that there is any thing wonderful about them, but the puzzle is, how do they happen to be in this place?"

Turning his attention to the occupants of this strangely-furnished apartment, his surprise and curiosity were still more strongly excited.

On a bundle of skins in one corner sat a bent and wrinkled old woman, whose long black hair and copper-colored skin plainly gave evidence of Indian blood. She was undoubtedly an old woman, and looked as if she might be sixty, but her leathern face was so seamed and furrowed, that it would be useless even to guess at her age. She was employed in

making a moccasin of deerskin, and mumbled to herself as she sat at her work, hardly raising her eyes when the visitors entered.

In another corner was an object which at once attracted the attention of the three strangers. It was a young girl, apparently thirteen or fourteen years of age, whose strange beauty would have been noticed any where. She seemed remarkably tall and slender for her age; her hands and feet were small and delicate; her black hair was neatly braided about her head; and her complexion, though browned by exposure, was remarkably clear and pure. But her chief characteristic, and her greatest attraction, was her wonderful eyes. These were large and dark, shaded with long lashes; and seemed to be always gazing into the distance, as if she could look through the thick walls of the "Beehelt Tavern," and see beings in the air which were not visible to the coarser eyes of those around her. A beautiful and melancholy child she was, who seemed strangely out of place in that wilderness, and in the home of such a man as Silas Wagg.

When the visitors entered, she was seated on a bench, with a number of particolored feathers in her lap, which she was arranging in various fanciful shapes. She immediately lifted up her head, like a startled fawn, and gazed at them with a most earnest and wondering expression.

She seemed to be especially attracted to Mary Boyd, for she rose from her seat and went to that young lady, took her hand and smoothed it between her own, and looked up in her face with a glance of such genuine admiration, that Mary fairly blushed before it.

"What a pretty child!" said Holston.

"What a beautiful girl!" warmly exclaimed John Jaffray.

"What is your name, little one?" asked Mary Boyd, taking her hand.

The child shook her head, and put her finger upon her lips.

"What do you mean? Can't you speak? Are you dumb?"

The child nodded, and drooped her eyes sorrowfully.

"Poor little thing!" said Mary and Holston together.

"What a pity!—and she so beautiful," murmured John.

The child took a piece of charcoal and rudely scrawled, on a bit of bark, the word "Sally."

Having thus established a means of communication, it was easy for Mary, with her womanly tact, gentleness and pity, to make friends with the poor girl, and to converse with her after a fashion. In fact, they soon became quite intimate, and the large eyes of the child really shone with pleasure, as her new friend took a seat by her side, and put her arms lovingly around her waist. John Jaffray hovered around her like a bee about a flower, and on him, also, she smiled pleasantly, and seemed to appreciate his efforts to entertain her.

Toward Holston her manner was very different, and there was something unnatural and constrained about her whenever he was near. When he spoke to her, she shuddered and turned pale; and yet, when he looked at her, her eyes became fastened upon his, as if she could not avoid gazing at them. She appeared to feel relieved when he turned away from her; and yet, whenever he moved or spoke, she looked toward him quickly, in a strange and startled manner.

"A very queer and interesting child," thought the young man, as he left her, and went to speak to the old Indian woman.

"Where did that little girl come from?" he asked. "Does she belong to you, granny?"

The crone mumbled unintelligibly, at first, and looked as if she did not comprehend the question. Then she answered:

"Sally is a good girl. The Great Spirit has touched her tongue. Auntie will take her home some time."

As this was all that could be got out of the old creature, Holston proceeded to inspect the room more closely. He noticed that the elegant saddle was of English manufacture, having the name and address of its maker stamped upon it. The pistols, also, were costly, and of London make. The muskets were regulation muskets, such as were used during the war by the British soldiers. One of the dirks was finely mounted with silver, and bore the inscription, "G. W. B. to A. H." There was nothing wonderful about these particulars, as Holston said, the only strange point being, how they happened to be in that place.

Desirous of further satisfying his curiosity, he ascended the ladder that led to the upper story ; but he found the trap securely bolted and padlocked, and was obliged to climb down again. As he did so, a chuckle from the old Indian woman showed him that she had been conscious of his attempt.

He then sauntered out, accompanied by John, and met Matthew and Mark Jaffray, and Silas Wagg, returning from their land-locating expedition.

When their bargain with Old Honesty was explained to him, he did not object to it, as he believed that they could not find a more pleasant or fertile spot for a location, although he would have preferred for the sake of one of the party, at least, to seek a safer one, near some established settlement.

He took, however, an early opportunity of speaking with Matthew Jaffray on the subject, asking him what sort of title he could get to the lands he had obtained.

"It is a free gift from our honest friend, Silas Wagg," replied the old man, "and we can purchase more when we choose to do so."

"But where does Silas Wagg get his title from?"

"He purchased the land, in fair trade, from the Indians, the rightful owners of the soil."

"Will such a title remain good? Has not the State of Virginia the right to dispose of these lands?"

"Friend Wagg purchased his land in the same manner as honest William Penn purchased his in Pennsylvania. One title ought to hold good as well as the other. Moreover, as the first settlers, we have the prior claim, in any event."

"Very true; but is it certain that your possession will be a peaceable one? We are far from any settlement, and the Indians might easily overpower your little colony."

"We have no reason to fear the Indians, and we may truly be thankful to the kind Providence which has led us to this safe abode, for friend Wagg assures us that no Indians will ever molest those whom he befriends."

"Can you confide fully in that assurance?"

"He has lived here for many years, in peace and harmony, and that ought to assure you. He assures us that we will be in no danger here, and I would rather take the word of an honest man than the bond of a rogue."

"He has so often told you that he is an honest man, that you have learned to believe him."

"Why should I not? Take care, Mr. Holston, how you speak against the character of another. You are sure that your own is entirely clear? We know little of you, but we hope it is."

"I hope so, too. I have only spoken because I hold that we should think first of the lives of those two tender and helpless ones who are in our care. We should meditate well, for their sakes, before we decide."

"You may be assured that I always do meditate well and prayerfully. As you have spoken of the women, I may as well tell you that I know your thoughts with regard to my sister's child, and that I and others have noticed your attempts to win her affections. Such thoughts are idle, and all such attempts are vain, for she is promised to my eldest son, even to Mark, and they will be united, with the permission of Providence, in due time. Your selfish interest in her, therefore should cease, though we shall still be glad to have your company and your assistance."

Holston made no reply, feeling that further conversation would be unprofitable, and knowing well how "set" Matthew Jaffray was in his ideas and prejudices.

CHAPTER V.

"THE MYSTERY OF THE FEATHERS."

WHEN Silas Wagg introduced his guests into his "tavern," he did so, as has been said, with a flourish, and he immediately proceeded to make them acquainted with the inmates.

"This here," said he, pointing to the old woman, "is my wife, or my squaw—it don't make any difference what you call her. She's a red-skin, as you see, and she was the darter of a chief. That's one way I climbed into the favor of the Injuns. She was old, but she was a chief's darter, and that made up fur every thin'. She's kinder crazy now, and ain't

of much use to me, but I keep her, bein's I'm an honest and fa'r-dealin' man."

"But who is this?" asked Matthew, stepping up to the child, and laying his hand on her head. "Who is this strange and lovely being, this wild flower of the wilderness? Surely, friend Wagg, it is not your child."

"Don't you think I'm good-lookin' enough to be her father?" asked Old Honesty, with a leer. "Ef I had a handsome wife, thar's no tellin'! I may say, though, as I'm allers keeful to speak the adzact truth, that she ain't mine. She is the darter of my brother Ephraim, who was killed in a skrimmage with the Injuns, and who left that young 'un fur me to take keef of. I've tried to do my duty by her, as an honest and fa'r-dealin' man; but it's her misfortin to be dumb, and that's a a great drawback."

"That is, indeed, an afflicting dispensation of Providence. Have you no means of communicating with her?"

"Anan?"

"Can't you talk with her at all?"

"Thar was a missionary among the Injins, who learned us how to talk with our fingers a little, and we git along tol'able well. She can write a little, too, though I can't."

The child nestled close to Mary Boyd, and looked at stern Matthew Jaffray as if she was afraid of him.

"You have a strange collection of weapons and other articles in your home, friend Wagg," said Mark, who had been examining the room. "Some of them, I perceive, are of value. How did you become possessed of so much property of that kind?"

"Some of it I've had fer ever so long; some of it was giv' to me while I was a guide in the Injin country; and some of it I bought from the Injins. To speak the adzack truth, as an honest man allers orter, I've got my doubts whether thar wasn't some stole by the Injins, but I couldn't keep 'em from stealin' it, and I mought as well have it as any body."

"How is it that you live here?" asked Luke, who always had an eye to the main chance. "You don't raise any thing, as I see, but you are quite fat and hearty."

"Meat is easy enough got, you know, as the woods are full of game, and as fer corn and sech matters, I find it cheaper

to buy 'em from the Injins than to raise 'em. Show 'em the bright gold, and they'll give you a heap of provisions fer it. I s'pose you brought out plenty of money—didn't you, Mr. Jaffray?"

"I have not neglected to supply myself sufficiently with gold," answered the old man, "though I did not expect to find much use for it in these wilds."

"With plenty of gold, you can jest make your everlastin' fortin, tradin' with the Injins. I'll show you how to do it, and will help you with your trades. They know me to be an honest and squar'-dealin' man, who allers speaks the ad-zack truth, and they'd trade mighty liberal with any man I should reccommend to 'em."

Terry Finnerty then came in, by the direction of Mrs. Boyd, to inform them that dinner was ready, and all, with the exception of the old woman, went out doors to partake of it. Silas Wagg invited himself, and Sally went under the protecting care of Mary Boyd.

As soon as dinner was over, Matthew Jaffray called his "boys," and went across the stream to build a log-cabin. The place selected was a short distance from the timber and from the stream, and all went to work in earnest, cutting down the trees and shaping the logs, and dragging them, by means of horses, to the chosen location. When the site was determined on, Holston drew a line around it, and commenced to build a stockade, which he intended to make of sharpened posts, driven into the ground, about six feet high above the soil. The earth within was to be thrown up against the posts, to strengthen the barrier, and to afford standing ground for the defenders.

It was hard work, as he had no one to assist him, except an occasional "lift" from John Jaffray or Terry; but he persevered, in spite of the sneers of Matthew and Mark and the open opposition of Silas Wagg. He succeeded so well that, when night set in, he had completed several yards of piling. The others, by that time, had prepared so many logs, that they proposed to commence "raising" their house in the morning.

After supper, Silas Wagg proposed that the women should sleep in the Beehalt Tavern that night, including in the

invitation as many others as chose to accept it. The widow was glad to enjoy the luxury of sleeping under a roof after "camping out" so long, and she and her daughter, acting under the advice of Matthew Jaffray, closed in with the offer. When this was settled, Holston said that he, also, intended to sleep there. Wagg wanted to demur to this proposition, but the house was a "tarvern," and he had extended his invitation to all, so that it was impossible for him to object.

Accordingly, Old Honesty carried some blankets and furs up into the second story, and the women ascended the ladder to the dormitory set apart for them. The little girl lay on a bundle of furs near the fire-place; the old woman slept in one corner; Silas Wagg occupied another; and Holston wrapped himself in his blanket, and laid down near the foot of the ladder.

He was awakened, in the course of the night, by the glare of a torchlight, and by the low and husky tones of a man's voice.

Looking up, he saw Silas Wagg and Sally, standing together near a lighted pine knot. The man held in his hand some particolored feathers, such as Holston had seen the girl have on her lap, and she was looking up at him, in an attitude of profound attention. As he placed the feathers in her hand, one by one, he spoke to her slowly and distinctly, as if wishing to impress something plainly upon her mind.

"Thar's the six white feathers, and the two little white 'uns," said he. "Give these to him fust. Then give him these twelve blue 'uns; then this big red 'un; and the black 'un last. Go along, now, and be sartin that you don't forgit to hand 'em over jest as I told you."

The girl quietly went out of the door, which was left unbolted, and Wagg again laid down, rolled himself up in his blanket, and was soon sound asleep, to judge from his sonorous snores.

"A very strange proceeding!" thought Holston, as he closed his eyes. "For what can he be sending that girl out with feathers, at this hour of the night? Why should he be so anxious to have them delivered to some body in a particular manner? Perhaps it is for the purpose of some barbarous

incantation, which the old fellow learned among the savages, and there may be an Indian medicine man living about here."

The young man went to sleep, but he was again awakened, when the night was nearly spent, by the husky tones of the old man, who was again speaking to the girl. She had just returned, and he appeared to be angry, for he was chiding her sharply, although Holston could not hear what was said. It was soon over, however; the child went to her couch, and the old man laid down and resumed his snoring.

In the morning, Holston thought he would speak about what he had seen and heard; but he reflected that it might have been a dream, that it was, at all events, an affair of no consequence, and that he would only expose himself to ridicule by investigating it. He maintained, therefore, what he considered a prudent silence.

The building work was resumed that day with renewed vigor. The first timbers of a large, double log-house were soon laid, and the strong arms of Matthew Jaffray and his three sons, aided by the Irishman, rapidly piled up others, until, by nightfall, the building was ready for a roof. Silas Wagg was there most of the time, making himself officious, and giving a great deal of advice, but not offering to assist in the labor.

Holston persevered in building his stockade, and made good progress, as John and Terry assisted him a little more than they had been able to the previous day. He employed his hours of rest in practicing with Sally the deaf and dumb alphabet, with which he was pretty well acquainted. John Jaffray, who was evidently fascinated with the strange and lovely child, besought Holston to teach him the alphabet, so that he might converse with her, and the latter promised that he would do so, as soon as he had fairly mastered it himself.

When night came, Mrs. Boyd, who had really enjoyed her rest under the roof of "Beehalt Tavern," resolved to sleep there again, and took Mary with her. They went up into the second story, Holston laid down at the foot of the ladder, and the other inmates slept as before.

During the night, the young man was again awakened, precisely as he had been awakened the previous night.

Opening his eyes, he again saw Sally and the old man standing near the torchlight—she in an attitude of attention, and he placing in her hands some feathers. As he did so, he used precisely the same language which he had used before.

“Thar’s the six white feathers, and the two little white ’uns,” he said. “Give those to him fust. Then give him these twelve blue ’uns; then this big red ’un; and the black ’un last. Be sartin that you find him, this time, and hand ’em over just as I tell you to. When you give him the black ’un, see that you shake it right fast, this a-way. Git along, now, and do your arrant right, or you’ll find yourself in trouble.”

The child left the house, leaving the door slightly ajar, and Wagg laid himself down to sleep.

“That was surely a dream,” thought Holston, “for I have seen and heard the same things twice in succession, and such, they say, is the nature of some dreams. I will go out into the air, to learn whether I am really awake or asleep.”

It was easy to do this without being observed, as Old Honesty was snoring again. Slipping out of his blanket, the young man quietly stepped to the door, which he found unlocked. This tended to persuade him that he had not been dreaming, but he went outside, leaving the door ajar, to make sure that he was awake.

There had been a shower, but it had cleared off, and the moon was shining brightly, causing the drops on the leaves of the trees and the grasses to sparkle like diamonds, and casting a thin veil of silver over the pleasant landscape.

Holston looked in the direction of the river, and there, just disappearing among the trees, he saw the light and graceful form of the child. He immediately resolved to follow her, and sped on in pursuit, with fleet but nearly noiseless steps. He soon caught a glimpse of her again, and kept her in sight, following at such a distance that she would not be likely to hear or see him, until she came to the river, when she disappeared from his view.

When he reached the bank, he saw her, at a little distance, seated in a small canoe, which she was paddling swiftly toward the opposite shore.

He thought he would call to her, but he rejected that idea as unmanly and ungenerous. Then he resolved to wait until she should return; but, after sitting and standing there for nearly an hour, he came to the conclusion that he was acting very foolishly, and decided that he had better go back and go to sleep, which he did accordingly.

He did not again awake until daylight, when he saw Sally sleeping quietly in her corner, and was almost convinced that he had been dreaming, for he felt sure that he would have heard her when she came in again, if she had really gone out.

CHAPTER VI.

A "GOOD INJUN."

THE longer Herbert Holston stayed in the vicinity of the "Beechalt Tavern," the more anxious he became to unravel its mysteries, for he was convinced that there were mysteries about it, some of which were strange if not really important. His two dreams puzzled him considerably, as he was unable to decide whether they were dreams or realities; but the character of Old Honesty puzzled him still more, and he was particularly puzzled by the fact that the old man lived there in safety and in utter seclusion, and by the strange character of his house, or castle, and the many incongruous articles with which it was furnished and adorned.

He was anxious to know what was in the upper stories of the "tavern," and to ascertain to what uses they were put; but, as the trap-door was kept locked, and as he did not wish to ask Wagg for permission to explore his tenement, he could only inquire of Mary Boyd what had been her experience while sleeping on the second floor.

"There is nothing strange about it," she answered. "The room is much like the room below, except that it seems to be a little smaller, and there is no fire-place. There is an opening in front, and one on the river side, but they are closed by

stout wooden shutters. There was nothing in the room, except a few boxes and barrels and some old rags."

"Boxes and barrels?" queried Holston. "That seems rather strange. Where did they come from?"

"Where does any thing come from?" asked Mary.

"I mean that I wonder how they got here. Did you notice any loopholes in the walls—any places to shoot through?"

"I saw nothing of the kind?"

"What means was there of getting into the upper story?"

"There was a ladder and a trap-door, but the trap-door was locked, as I could see. Why do you ask all these questions, Mr. Holston? I never knew you to be so inquisitive before. You seem to be very suspicious about something."

"I am suspicious, Mary. I am suspicious of the old man who lives in that house, and I'm suspicious of the house itself."

"Why should you be suspicious of him? Uncle Matthew says that he is very much pleased with Mr. Wagg, because he is such an honest man."

"I would be more willing to believe in his honesty, if he was not continually boasting of it."

"But see how generous he is; he has given Uncle Matthew a square league of land in this beautiful place."

"It is easy to be generous with property that is not your own."

"Why should he bring us here, and why should he wish us to remain and settle here, unless he means to do well by us?"

"How is it that he lives here alone and unmolested in the midst of the wilderness, and surrounded by savages, unless he is in league with them, so much so that he may be called one of them?"

"Uncle Matthew says the reason is, because he is such good man."

"Your Uncle Matthew is mistaken, Mary. There is very little that is good and noble in the Indian character. They are a race of savages, and are governed only by their savage instincts. I do not believe that they would allow this man to live among them, unless he was useful to them, and I fear

that he has brought us here for the purpose of leading us into a trap, where we may be plundered and murdered by his cruel allies."

"You fairly make my blood run cold, Mr. Holston. How very suspicious you are."

"I am always suspicious where your welfare is concerned, Mary, for your life is dearer to me than my own. You know how much I love you."

"You have told me so before; but you ought not to speak in that way, for Uncle Matthew says that I belong to my cousin Mark."

"Never mind what your Uncle Matthew says. I think your mother is not so well disposed toward your cold, formal and calculating cousin Mark, and if she should be on our side, we need not trouble ourselves about others."

"What do you mean by *we*, sir? As if I agreed with you in all you say. Let go my hand, for mother sees us, and is calling us to breakfast."

The work of building the log-cabin proceeded rapidly and cheerfully that morning. When the rafters were up, and the shingles were split for the roof, Matthew Jaffray allowed his son John and Terry Finnerty to assist Holston with the stockade, because Luke, who was considered the most promising farmer of the family, said that it would be very useful to keep their horses in at night.

Silas Wagg, as usual, was with them much of the time, but vibrated between the house and his "tavern." He seemed moody, nervous and anxious, and had evidently been paying a visit to a jug of rum, which he kept in a corner of his habitation, for his gait was quite unsteady at times.

During "nooning," after the settlers had finished their dinner, and while the men were enjoying a temporary rest from their labors, they were surprised and startled by the appearance of an Indian, who came out of the woods, and boldly approached them. He had on his war-paint, was decked out in all his barbarous finery, and was armed with gun, tomahawk and knife. As he came toward the place where the party were seated, they started to their feet, and Mary Boyd instinctively sought the protection of Holston.

Silas Wagg, however, did not manifest any symptoms of

wonder or uneasiness, but stepped up to the intruder, took him by the hand, and commenced to talk with him in an Indian dialect. Then he made him sit down to the remnants of the meal, and the savage proved that his "untutored mind" could grasp the subject of eating in its fullest extent, for he left scarcely a fragment of the provision.

When he had finished, he took his tomahawk from his belt, shook it ferociously at the white people, and looked at Wagg, who again spoke to him in the Indian tongue, with a profusion of grimaces and gesticulations. Old Honesty then took the red-man around among the settlers, and made him shake hands with them, speaking a few words as he paused in front of each. When he came to Mary Boyd, the warrior stopped, and looked at her with such a wild and wolfish expression, that she shuddered and drew back, and Holston involuntarily stepped forward, between her and the savage.

"What does this mean, friend Wagg?" asked Matthew Jaffray, when the ceremony of hand-shaking had been gone through with. "Who is this Indian, and why has he come among us?"

"He's a friendly chap—one of my kind of Indians—and you can believe what old Silas Wagg tells you, as you well know. What do you reckon he meant, when he took out his tomahawk, and shuck it round at you folks? Looked kinder queer, didn't it? Wal, he jest wanted to know whether he and his folks might 'light down here and make a massacre of you. I told him that you were good white people, that you were my friends, that I had giv' you land, that you were goin' to settle down here along with me, and that he, and all other Injins, must treat you well, or leave you alone. Then he said that if you were my friends, you were his friends, too, and that he wanted to shake hands with you. Jest see what it is to treat 'em right, and to be known among 'em as an honest and squar'-dealin' man!"

"I wish," whispered Holston to Mary, "that I could talk that red fellow's language. I would like to know what Silas Wagg really said to him."

Old Honesty went to his "tavern" with his new guest, and in a short time the red-man returned, and went away toward the river, carrying a large jug in his hand, ("Wheredid that

come from?" thought Holston,) and staggering under a load that was not in the jug.

"Have you been trading with that man, friend Wagg?" asked Matthew Jaffray.

"Wal, sorter tradin', I s'pose you may say. I've been givin' him some rum, 'cause I promised it to him, and I'm allers keerful to speak the truth, and allers do jest what I promise to. That's one of the reasons why the Injins, as well as the white folks, call me Old Honesty."

"Do you consider it proper and safe to sell rum to the savages?"

"Wal, that Injin, you see, is a mighty good Injin. I know him well, and he would never lie to me. He don't mean to drink that liquor, or to let any body else drink it, but he makes a kind of medicine outen it, by mixin' it with b'iled roots and things."

As the hour of "nooning" had been considerably prolonged, Matthew Jaffray told his "boys" to hurry, and went over the creek to finish the log-house. This was soon done, and then the old man and Mark moved in the women and portable property of the family, leaving Luke to assist Holston in building the stockade.

By nightfall every thing was in readiness, and Mrs. Boyd declared that she really felt at home, although there was not yet any fireplace in the house. The stockade was nearly finished—that is, the posts were all securely placed in the ground, in a circle round the house, with the exception of a space of a few yards, but the earth was not entirely thrown up within, and work had not been commenced on the ditch that Holston contemplated digging on the outside. As nothing more could be done that night, the young man piled up in the unenclosed space some logs that had been left from the house, and then considered that the position was tolerably secure.

Silas Wagg, who had been with the settlers during the greater part of the afternoon, smelling strongly of rum, bid them an affectionate adieu, and went across the creek to his "tavern" before dark.

CHAPTER VII.

BAD INDIANS.

As soon as the settlers had finished their supper, which was cooked out of doors and eaten in the house, Matthew Jaffray proposed that they should formally dedicate, or inaugurate, their new home, by praise and prayer. To this, as a matter of course, no one could object, and he opened his large old Bible, and read a chapter from the old Testament, and then a chapter from the new. After singing a hymn of thanksgiving, in which all joined, he knelt down to pray. He was not only unusually fervent on this occasion, but unusually lengthy, so much so that even Mark considered him tedious. He went over the whole ground that they had traveled since they left Virginia, re-recounting all their perils and hardships, and giving thanks to the Lord separately and particularly, for deliverance from each. He then spoke of the pleasant land to which they had been brought, and of their great good fortune in securing such an excellent location on such easy terms. In fact, his prayer was a strange mingling of piety and worldliness, such as was often heard among the thrifty settlers. He did not omit, in this connection, to remember Silas Wagg, and to pray that the especial blessing of divine grace might rest upon that worthy and generous landlord, that honest and laudlike man, who might properly be compared to good old Daniel in the den of lions. When to all this amount of narrative, exhortation and supplication, was added a long prayer for future safety and happiness, it may be supposed that the worshipers grew weary, and were glad when the exercises were ended.

Herbert Holston became quite restive and uneasy toward the latter part of the prayer, and it must be confessed that he paid little attention to it, for his eyes and ears, as well as his thoughts, were otherwise employed. In spite of the assurances of Silas Wagg, he was apprehensive of danger, and was continually on the alert, thinking that their time

might be as profitably spent in guarding against danger as in praying against it.

As soon as the old man had finished, Holston unceremoniously hastened out of the house, and went to inspect the defenses. Thinking that the vacant space in the stockade might be made a little stronger, he took an ax, and went to work to cut some posts, with which to brace up the logs that he had already placed there.

As he was thus engaged, he heard a rustling outside of the stockade, which excited his suspicions. Without pausing from his work, he listened, and looked toward the place where he heard the noise. Soon he saw, by the faint moonlight that staggered through the clouds, the head of an Indian slowly raised above the logs. Stopping not a moment to parley, he suddenly turned and aimed a blow at the intruder with his ax; but he missed him, and the savage bounded off to the woods.

The young man rushed into the house, to get his rifle and to alarm his companions, when

“At once there rose so wild a yell,”

that the settlers started to their feet, and instinctively grasped their weapons, thinking that a legion of demons had burst upon them.

They were not far wrong, for there came a flight of arrows into the stockade, accompanied by a few musket-shots, and the savages poured out from the woods in such numbers, that it seemed as if every tree, every bush, and every knoll had formed hiding-places for them.

Together they rushed toward the stockade, discharging their arrows and bullets as they came, and whooping and yelling like fiends.

Then it was that Matthew Jaffray showed himself a man of mettle, and the right man for such an emergency.

Placing himself and his five men at those points of the stockade which most needed to be guarded, he ordered them to reserve their fire until the enemy came quite close, and to wait till he gave the word. He was perfectly cool and collected, and the stern tones of his voice rung out like the note of a trumpet, inspiring his followers with his own zeal and

courage, though it may safely be said that none of them stood in need of additional courage.

The first volley from the rifles, in the practical hands of the Virginians, did great execution among their foes. Every shot told, and the savages were staggered for a moment, giving the defenders time to reload. Another volley was sent among them, which caused many of their number to scamper off and seek shelter in the timber. Others, however, reached the barrier, and endeavored to climb over it, but the white men brought their pistols into play, and shot them down as fast as they appeared.

The Indians had evidently expected to take the settlers by surprise, and were greatly disappointed at the result, for they set up a hideous howling, and adopted a different system of strategy, availing themselves of the cover of the trees, bushes and hillocks, behind which they crawled up toward the fortification, watching every opportunity to send an arrow at the defenders. This sort of warfare suited the white men, as the main body of the timber was distant nearly a rifle-shot from the house, and the savages were frequently compelled to expose themselves, in their approaches to the stockade. Their cool and vigilant foes did not neglect these advantages, but sent a rifle bullet at every bit of red skin that showed itself, while the arrows of the Indians whistled harmlessly over their heads, or stuck in the posts that formed the barrier.

"Surely this seems more like hunting than fighting," said old Matthew Jaffray, as he calmly wiped his rifle, and stood it against the stockade to cool. "We pick off those savages at our leisure, without fear of being harmed by their missiles, and such work partakes too much of the nature of slaughter to suit my taste."

"You say truly, father," responded Mark. "It seems hardly worth while to slay them when they are unable to injure us, and it is not the part of Christians to take such advantage of our superior weapons and our superior position. I think we had better confine ourselves to watching them, and it is probable that they will go away at daylight."

"I don't think so," protested John. "It is certain that they came here to murder us, and we would all have been

slaughtered, if it had not been for the protection of this stockade. We may thank Mr. Holston for saving our lives."

"Not so," replied his brother. "We should be thankful to Providence for this preservation, as for all others. You seem disposed to exalt that young man above the rest of us, and above the Almighty himself. It is possible, according to my notion, that the fortification may have been really the cause of our trouble, for it may have incited the Indians to acts which they would not have committed, if they had believed us to be peaceably inclined."

"I am much of your mind, son Mark," said the old man; "for friend Wagg assured us that we would not be molested by the savages, if we should let them alone, and should not act toward them in a hostile manner. He dissuaded us, quite strongly, against building a fort."

"I am out of patience with you, father," exclaimed John. "I really believe that you and Mark have gone crazy about that old man. I would like to know why the Indians should come here in such numbers, at such an hour, and in such a manner, unless they meant to surprise and murder us. Look at Luke! What is the matter with him?"

Something serious was the matter with Luke, for he had been struck by an arrow, which had passed clear through his head, and he was a dead man before he touched the ground.

The others crowded around him, but soon perceived that he was beyond earthly help, and then they reloaded their rifles, and fired at their skulking foes, as if the Christian feelings which they had lately expressed were forgotten in a desire for vengeance; but they had hardly recommenced their fighting, when their attention was attracted by an alarm at the front of the house, where only Holston and Terry Finnerty were stationed.

The savages had not only noticed the temporary cessation of hostilities on the part of the whites, but they observed the commotion among them at the death of Luke. Rightly supposing that it had been caused by the fall of one of their number, they gathered courage, and made a combined assault upon the front and rear of the building. They principally directed their efforts against the unfinished part of the stockade, and when Matthew Jaffray rushed to that place, on hearing the

alarm, he found Holston and the Irishman engaged in close conflict with the Indians, who were climbing over the palisades, and endeavoring to enter the house.

Firing their pistols among the dark forms, the settlers rushed upon them with clubbed rifles and knives, and the old man, seizing an ax, laid about him with signal vigor and execution :

Holston had just dispatched a savage, with whom he had closed in a death grip, when he was startled by a scream, which he knew was uttered by Mary Boyd. Looking up, he saw her raised in the arms of a stalwart warrior, who was lifting her over the stockade. As quick as thought he rushed upon the Indian, and buried his knife in his back, but the girl had been already passed over the barrier, and was being swiftly carried away to the woods.

Pursuit being useless at that time, the young man turned upon the savages that had collected within the stockade, and flew at them like an enraged tiger. His companions, also, redoubled their exertions, and being speedily assisted by Mark and John, who had repelled the attack on the other side of the house, they soon succeeded in putting their enemies to flight, and driving them over the palisades to the woods.

The house, which had lately been filled with the pleasant sounds of prayer and thanksgiving, then became truly a house of mourning. Old Matthew Jaffray and his sons gazed sorrowfully at the dead body of Luke, and missed him more than they had ever thought they could. Never again would he drive the plow through fertile acres; never again would he gloat over rich pastures and herds of fat cattle; never again would he gladly gather into barns the golden wealth of the harvest. His labors were ended, and his feet were treading fairer meadows, and his eyes were greeted with greater glories than those which had been his delight on earth.

Mrs. Boyd, whose hand had been cut in an attempt to rescue Mary, was mourning and lamenting for her lost child, weeping, like Rachel, and refusing to be comforted.

Herbert Holston raved and chafed in impotent fury, for he had seen the lady of his love torn from her home by merciless savages, and had been powerless to prevent the outrage. He wished to start out immediately in pursuit, and to endeavor,

by some desperate means, to effect her rescue; but he was persuaded from the attempt by John and Terry, who showed him that he would have no chance against such a number, and that he would be obliged to wait until daylight, at all events, before he could follow the trail.

All waited, in gloom and almost in silence, until daylight when they took a survey of the field and of their own condition. They then perceived that the slaughter among the Indians had been great, although not as great as they had supposed it must be. On their own side, Luke had been killed outright, Terry had been painfully wounded, and all the others had received scratches more or less severe. To add to their trouble, all their horses had been stolen, except Holston's and two others, that were concealed in a thicket.

CHAPTER VII.

BANISHED.

WHILE the settlers were taking note of their losses, and bewailing their unfortunate condition, they were surprised, if not pleased, by the arrival of Silas Wagg, who hastened up to them, wheezing and puffing, and saluted them in his usual hearty and jovial manner.

"Mornin' to you all," said he. "How did you git along in your new house last night?"

The solemn voices of his late guests made him pause, and his countenance fell, and his tone changed immediately, as he looked around at the scene of slaughter.

"What's been the matter here?" he asked, with an expression of deep concern. "I see blood scattered about, and here is the carkiss of an Injun. What's been the matter? What does it mean?"

"It means," mournfully answered Matthew Jaffray, "that we were attacked by a large body of Indians last night, that we barely escaped with our lives, though we beat them off at last, that my son Luke has been slain, and that my niece, Mary

Boyd, has been carried off by the savages. Besides this, they have stolen nearly all of our horses."

Old Honesty cast a reproachful glance at Holston, and shook his head sorrowfully.

"I ain't goin' to say that I told you so," said he, "though I giv' you plenty of advice. I ain't goin' to blame any body, either, though you all know that I warned you ag'inst that fort."

"Just what father and I were saying last night," interrupted Mark.

"Shouldn't wonder, 'cause you're men of sense," continued Wagg, with another reproachful look at Holston. "We won't mind that now, though, 'cause I don't want to blame any body. The pint I was comin' to is this; those warn't good Injuns that war here last night."

"I should think not," muttered John; but Wagg did not hear him.

"Those warn't good Injuns, I say; and who in creation war they? That's the question. All the Injuns around here know me, and they wouldn't think of hurtin' one of my friends, ef they knowed he was my friend. But they're death on inimies. It stands to reason, thar'fore, that they must have been some wild and murderin' Injuns from way up the kentry, and not the natyve Injuns from about the river; or else, they had found out that you were buildin' a fort, and they s'posed, nateral enough, that you had come here to fight 'em, and they're mighty quick to begin a fight when any body shows fight to 'em."

"Just what father and I were saying last night," again interrupted Mark.

"Wal, we won't mind that, jest now, as I don't want to blame any body. I jest wish I had staid here with you last night, and I shall never quit bein' sorry fur it that I didn't, 'cause you wouldn't have had a bit of trouble ef I had. I had e'ena'most made up my mind to stay; but I reckon-ed, bein' as you had got into your new house, you would want to be to yourselves fur a while. When I got to the bank of the branch yonder, I thought I mought be doin' wrong, and I started to turn back, but I recollected that my old woman and my brother's little gal war all alone at home, and I went

over to take care of 'em. I wish now that I'd staid—I jest wish I had staid."

"Do you really believe, friend Wagg," asked Matthew Jaffray, "that we would not have been molested if you had remained with us?"

"Believe it! I'm jest as sure of it as I am that I stand here now."

"How was it that you didn't hear the firing?" asked John. "It was loud enough, and there was enough of it."

"You must remember that the Beehelt Tavern is 'way across the branch, my son."

"Not more than half a mile."

"Half a mile is a long ways, my son; and then, ag'in, I allers sleep fearful sound when I once git to sleepin'."

"Son John," said Matthew Jaffray, "we know well that we can believe what honest Silas Wagg tells us, and your remarks savor of impertinence."

"Father and I were saying last night," resumed Mark, "that we thought the building of the fort might have had something to do with bringing the Indians against us, as we know that you had counseled us not to build it."

"In coorse it had, though I don't want to blame any body. It had every thing to do with it. Why didn't the Indians come down and kill *me*? They mought have done it easy enough, as thar was nobody in the tavern but me and my old woman and my brother's little gal. The reason why they didn't come was jest because they knowed me, and they knowed my peaceability. Ef your people hadn't tried to make a fort—which was good for nothing except to aggravate the Injuns—but had jest told 'em, when they come around, that you war particklar friends of Silas Wagg, and that Old Honesty was takin' care of you, they would have treated you well, and would have gone off quietly. But that fort of yourn jest made 'em think that you meant to have the land, and that you stood ready to fight fur it, and they acted accordin'? I shouldn't wonder a bit, now, ef some of you, 'stead of speakin' pleasant to 'em, and tryin' to git on the right side of 'em, jest started in to cussin' and fightin' 'em, and so began the skrimmage."

Matthew Jaffray and his son looked at each other, and both

looked strangely at Holston. Then the old settler related how the fight had commenced; how Holston had hurried from the house as soon as prayers were ended, how he had seen an Indian looking over the logs at the stockade, how he had made a blow at the intruder with an ax, and how the savages had then commenced a furious assault upon the house.

"Thar it is!" exclaimed Old Honesty. "The raal p'int is jest as plain as daylight. I don't want to blame any body, and you'll stand me witness that I've kept from it as long as I could; but, when I see how things are goin' and when I've seen it ever since you folks have been here, it ain't in my natur', as an honest and plain-speakin' man, to hold my tongue about it; 'specially when things have come to such a pass as this. Thar," he continued, looking severely at Holston, and shaking his finger impressively, "thar stands the cause of all this here trouble. That young man, when you first come here, wouldn't let you settle down in quiet and peaceability arter I had giv' you the land, and had told you that the Injuns would never trouble you, so long as you didn't start out to fightin' 'em; but he wanted to go to work right away and build a fort, and it seems that he got you into it, too, somehow."

"My son Luke thought," remarked Matthew Jaffray, "that it would be useful to keep our cattle in at night."

"But the Injuns thought it war a fort; thar's whar your son Luke was mistaken; but he has paid for his mistake with his life, and you can't blame *him*. I warned you against buildin' that fort, but that young man kept on a-buildin' it, and now you see what has come of it. I told you that you'd git along safe enough, and that you ortn't to be aggervatin' the Injuns, and now you see what happens, along of his aggervatin' 'em. Ef you knowed Silas Wagg to be an honest and fair-dealin' man afore this—as I'm sartin you did—you can now believe his word for ever and ever, 'cause every thin' he told has come out jest so."

"We know it," answered Mark, "and we are sorry that we did not take your advice in all respects."

"Jest so; but I was goin' to say that buildin' the fort wasn't the wust thing he did. When the Injuns come here

—no doubt with intentions of peaceability, and only wantin' to know what you war doin' here, and why you war buildin' a fort—did he speak pleasant to 'em, and ax 'em ef they knowed Silas Wagg, and tell him that you war friends of Old Honesty? Not *he*! He jest picked up an ax, and commenced fightin' 'em right frum the start. It's no wonder they were hind of riled, when they saw a big fort built up against 'em, and saw a chap in it who was ready to cut and slash and shoot at 'em without sayin' a word to 'em."

"If the Indians meant to be peaceable," suggested John, "it seems strange that they should have come here in the night in such numbers, and should have hid themselves so carefully, and should have made their attack so suddenly and all together."

"Son John," said his father, "you are speaking of matters that concern older heads than yours, and your remarks, as I have already told you, savor of impertinence."

"The raal p'int," continued Wagg, "is as plain daylight, as I said afore. Thar was one man who built that fort to aggrivate the Injuns, and who raised a skirmmage with 'em when they come here. That chap is to blame for all the trouble, and its my duty to say, as an honest and plain-speakin' man, that you ort to send that chap away frum here, afore you git into more trouble. Didn't you say that his horse wasn't stole by the Injuns?"

"It was left in the woods," answered Mark.

"Jest so; that looks kinder like a circumstance, too. He was bound to take good keer of his own, it seems. I say that chap ort to be sent away."

"I am of the same opinion, friend Wagg," said Matthew Jaffray, "although I'm naturally unwilling to adopt any harsh or unpleasant measures. My son Mark and myself have had frequent suspicions concerning this stranger, who has, as I may say, forced himself upon our company. We have observed, also, his attempts to win the affections of my niece, although he had been informed that she was destined for my son Mark. Our suspicions have been strengthening until these fearful developments by which one of our family has been slain, and another has been lost to us, have caused us to see him, as you at once saw him, friend Wagg, in his true light as a mischief-

maker and a man of an abandoned heart. We are now compelled out of regard for our own safety, reluctant as we may be to take such a step, to discard him, to cast him off, to send him forth from among us, and to forbid him to associate any more with us. The property that belongs to you, Mr. Holston, can easily be found by you, I suppose."

"I wish nothing," coldly answered Holston, "except some ammunition for my rifle. I believe you have all gone crazy, and there is nothing left for me to do, but to go alone and seek for Mary Boyd. I will find her and will rescue her, if it is possible."

"If you are thinkin' about such a wild chase as that, young man," said Wagg, "you had better jest quit thinkin' about it, 'cause you couldn't do any good, and you would only git her into some wuss trouble. As for that handsome young gal, I mean to go arter her myself, and I will talk right to the Injuns, and will git her away from them, and will bring her back safe. I say that I will do it, and these folks know well that they can allers believe in my word, and you ain't wanted to meddle in this business at all, young man. I must say, though, friend Jaffray," he continued, "that I can't be so sartin about bringin' back the hosses, 'cause the Injuns have got 'em now, and it's likely they mean to keep 'em."

Without replying, Holston turned and walked away.

"What I said about the gal, I meant, and I will bring her back to you, as I said I would," resumed Old Honesty; "and now, those p'int's bein' settled the next thing for you folks to do is to go to work and and t'ar down that fort of yourn, and do it well, so's to leave nothin' standin' that mought aggravate the Injuns."

"It shall be done without delay," answered Matthew Jaffray. "I have no doubt that the logs can be made more useful in warming our dwelling, than in firing the passions of the red-men."

After having disposed of the few bodies of the Indians that had not been carried off by their companions, and having buried that of Luke in a pleasant and sequestered spot, the settlers proceeded to demolish the stockade which it had cost Holston so much labor to erect. When he saw the work of

demolition fairly under way, Silas Wagg left them, saying that he was going to seek Mary Boyd, and declaring that he would surely bring her back, if he should be compelled to traverse a thousand miles of Indian territory.

CHAPTER IX.

WINE IN, AND WIT OUT.

ALTHOUGH the wound which Terry Finnerty had received in the defense of the log-house was not a dangerous one, it was painful and very annoying, and he became clamorous to have it dressed, so that it might heal quickly.

"He's gone, and bad cess to him, the old thafe of the world," muttered the Irishman, looking after Old Honesty as he waddled toward the Beehalt Tavern. "Sure and I wouldn't be willin' to take my oath that it wasn't along of him that Masther Luke got killed, and purty Miss Mary got carried off, and I got this ugly hole in my shoulther myself."

"What is that you are saying, sir?" asked Matthew Jaffray. "You had better be careful how you talk about our good friend, Silas Wagg."

"I wasn't talkin' at all, sir, barrin' about this hurt in my shoulther; more by token, my coat is full of blood, and it hurts as if part of me was in purgatory at this minute and pas' prayin' out."

"What is it that hurts you, Terry, the coat or the blood?" inquired John.

"It's nayther, sur, or both of thim; but it's the hurt itself that hurts worst of all; av coorse it's the hurt that hurts, and you must cure it, some of yez, and the hole must be stopped up, or I'll be afther bleedin' to death, and it's not a stroke of work I can do at pullin' up these stakes that we driv down so straight and so stout, and it looks like a livin' shame to be tearin' them to pieces now, when they served us so well in keepin' off the bloody Injins last night."

"Hold your tongue, Terry, and mind your own business,"

said the old man, as he cut open the Irishman's sleeve, and proceeded to wash and examine the wound. He soon perceived that it had been inflicted by a bullet, which had passed through the fleshy part of the arm, through the shoulder, without doing any material damage.

"What is the matter with you?" said he, as Terry winced and bellowed under the rough examination. "You fought well and bravely last night, and you ought to be too stout-hearted to make so much ado about such a little hurt as this."

"Little, do you call it! It's big enough to let the life out of a man, if it was only put in the right place, or the wrong one, for there's no right place about me for such a hole to fit. The fightin' was aisy enough, Misther Jaffray, and it's little I minded it, for the blood was hot and b'ilin' up in me then; but when the fightin' is over, and the blood runs out of the heart on to the ground and into the coat-sleeve, it's mighty coolin' to the feelin's."

"You ought not to feel so bad about it; perhaps a little blood-letting will be good for you."

"It's very well for you Americans to say that same, as it's mighty little blood you have in you, any how, and it's only the holes that let the wind through you that will kill you, as you're all dried up entirely and ready to blow away. But an Irishman is all blood and brains, and you might as well take away his senses as take the blood out of him. If it was a tap on the head with a shillaly, and nothing but a cracked skull or the like of that, I shouldn't mind it a bit, but cuttin' an' shootin' takes the red blood from the heart, and the kittle can't bile when there's no wather in it at all."

"Well, Terry, as you are so distressed about it, we must see what can be done for you. All of us, I, believe, have hurts that need attention. Sister Martha, have you any rags to bind up our cuts and bruises with?"

"I might, perhaps, make shift to bind them up," answered Mrs. Boyd; "but I have no salves or lotions, having left them, together with my lint and bandages, at Mr. Wagg's house."

"Terry Finnerty is the boy, ma'am, who will git 'em for yez, in half a shake of a sheep's tail, if you'll let me go and

make a visit to the ould haythen, Misther Jaffray. My shoulth'er hurts me bad enough, to be sure, but my legs are good enough for a power of walkin' yet."

"Very well, Terry, you may trot along as fast as you want to, and if you hurry, you will be likely to find friend Wagg at home. Be sure that you speak to him well and fairly; leave off your impertinence, and keep a civil tongue in 'your head."

"It's myself who will do that same, and will show him the height of civility," muttered Terry, as he nimbly started toward the creek. "I'll be as persuadin' as if I was goin' a-coortin,' for I want to coax the ould divil to give me a drop or two of the craythur, which he's got the mortal powers of it, in jugs, if not in barrels, down there in his shanty. A taste of the ould sinner's rum would do me more good than all Misthress Boyd's salves and lotions, because it would put some warmth into the little blood that's left in me, and I'm thinkin' he likes it well enough to know what a poor fellow suffers for the lack of it. I believe I shall have to git around him by abusin' poor Misther Holston, though I'm sure he's the nicest man among us, barrin' Miss Mary, who is nowhere at all just now, bein' as she has been carried off by the bloody savages."

Thus hoping and thus reasoning, the Irishman crossed the creek, and hastened to the "Beehalt Tavern," which he reached shortly after Silas Wagg had entered it."

"The heighth of the mornin' to yez again, ould Misther Honesty!" said he, as he entered at the door, and surprised the landlord in the act of drawing some rum from a barrel that stood in a corner.

"What do you want here, young man? What do you keep a chasin' of me up for?" asked Wagg, letting the liquor run on the floor as he looked up at the intruder.

"I'm not chasin' yez at all, Misther Honesty. Plase to turn that stopper this minute, sir, for that stuff has the look of the right sort, and it's a sin to waste it, when it's so precious scarce in this horrid country."

"Don't bother yourself about my rum, young man. What is it that you want?"

"You know, Misther Honesty, that we are dyin' wid

wounds and bruises, and petrifyin' sores, that we got while we were fightin' wid the bloody savages last night, and there's not a drop of salve or lotion or lint or bandages about the place, bein' as Misthress Boyd left them all over here, and she sent me to git some of the same, Misther Honesty."

"Very well; find what you want, and be off, for I am goin' away, and I mean to lock up the house."

"You might ax me to sit down and rest a little minute, good Misther Honesty, because my shoulther is hurtin' mighty bad, and I'm bate out entirely wid fightin' last night and walkin' this mornin'."

"Sit down a while, then, and rest yourself; but I must be off very soon," replied Wagg, as he lifted his cup to his lips.

"You're after goin' to git the Injins to give up Miss Mary, then, sir? It's yourself that has the coaxin' way, Misther Honesty, and the commandin' way, and the right way altogether. Faix, it was a fine settin' down that you gave that young chap this mornin'."

"He desarved a settin' down, and as an honest and squar'-dealin' man, I was bound to give it to him."

"That did he, Misther Honesty, and it's the worruld's pity that he hadn't got it afore, for then we would all have been alive and doin' well, instead of bein' killed and carried off and shot to pieces."

"He felt that he desarved it, and he couldn't say nothin' fur himself," said Wagg, smacking his lips as he set down his cup, and proceeding to refill it at the barrel.

"What could he say, sir, when he knew that he had got us into such a scrape, and had made us fight for our lives when there was no necessity for it? By the same token, the blood has all run out of me through the hole in my shoulther, and has left me as dry as a bone. I'm as wake as a sick kitten, sure, and it's the could chills that's comin' over me at this minute. Oh-h-h!"

"P'raps you had better wrap up in that buffler skin. Had the young feller come back afore you left?" inquired Wagg, as he again emptied his cup.

"Not a bit of it, sir, and he won't dare to come back, for he's afraid of an honest man's eye. I have looked at him

sometimes, till he turned white as a sheet in the face; but I haven't got such a speakin' eye as yours is, sir. Oh, Misther Honesty, I'm so wake that I can hardly sit up, and my back feels as if the ould divil was rollin' icebergs up and down it."

"P'raps a little of this rum would strengthen you and warm you up," said Wagg, who had again filled his tin cup.

"Maybe it would, sir. Faix, I believe it's the very thing I'm needin' at this minute, or I'll freeze for the lack of some-thin' heatin' in my veins. Jist a drop or so, if you please, sir. Here's the best of health to you, Misther Honesty, and sure you ought to have it; for, as the good Book says, an honest man is the noblest work of God, exceptin' the wimmin, of coorse."

Terry finished the contents at a gulp, sending the strong liquor down his throat like shot out of a shovel. It caused the tears to start into his eyes, but he smacked his lips with an air of satisfaction, and his tongue was loosened immediately.

"I knew that that stuff was the right sort, Misther Honesty," said he. "An honest man like yourself would not be keepin' any thin' else. It warms me all over, and I feel almost stout enough to go and help 'em tear down those bloody posts which that young rascal made us work so hard to put up."

"Are you folks tearin' them all down?" asked Wagg, helping himself to some more rum.

"Indade they are, sir, and it's a good job they're doin'. They sent that young chap away, like St. Patrick dhriv the snakes and toads out of ould Ireland, and they don't want any thin' left to remember him by. Are you goin' to bring Miss Mary back to-day, Misther Honesty?"

"To-day or to-morrow, fur sartin. I promised to bring her back, and I'm allers keerful to stick cluss to my word."

"That's the talk, Misther Honesty. You'll do it, I know, for it's yourself that has the coaxin' and deluderin' tongue, as Miss Mary says."

"Did she say that, young man?"

"She did say that, sir, for surely. She was a little frightened about you at first, but she soon got over that, and I think she has taken a likin' to you since. If Misther Holston

should ever come back, I wish you could be there to hear the talkin' to that she'll give him."

"What do you mean?"

"I mane that she would talk him out of her sight, as quick as I could toss off another cup of that fine old rum, if you was to ax me to do it."

"Take some more of it, young man, and tell me why you think she would treat him so," said Wagg, as he handed the cup to Terry.

"Here's health to your honest ould body, and more power to your deluderin' tongue!" said the Irishman, as he poured the burning liquid down his throat. "I say what I know, and nothin' but that, Misther Honesty. The young chap thinks she is tender on him, but he will find out how much he is mistaken, if she comes across him ag'in. It's not such a hard-hearted and soft-handed young slip that will suit her, at all, for she wants a man of years and proportions. I have taken a powerful notion to her, and might marry her myself; but I am from ould Ireland, and wouldn't have an American woman to save her."

"What's that you say?" angrily exclaimed Wagg.

"I was sayin', sir, that I'm an Irishman, and no American woman would have one. You are jist the size, yourself, I'm thinkin', Misther Honesty, to fill Miss Mary's eye. She don't care a rap for these wild and giddy boys, and I've heard her say that she wanted to find an honest and stiddy man, wid some property of his own, and she was lookin' at you mighty strong when she said it, sir."

Silas Wagg, who had again paid his attentions to the barrel of rum, had by this time become visibly affected by his frequent potations—so much so, that his brain was muddled, and his perceptions were by no means clear. His voice was thick and husky; his little eyes twinkled and snapped; his face was flushed and mottled; and his mouth was spread into a strange compound of leer and simper, that spoke of self-conceit, and a desire to gain possession of Mary Boyd.

Terry noticed the condition of his host, but forbore to remark upon it, thinking that it might be turned to some account for the benefit of himself or his friends. As he felt that the honor had mounted into his own head, he wisely concluded

that he had better not drink any more, and contented himself with merely touching his lips to the cup when it was again handed to him.

"Do you really think the gal has tuk a likin' to me?" asked Wagg, with a peculiar wink that closed both of his eyes. "I didn't reckon that she had got her heart sot on me jest yet, though I knew that she would come to it arter a while."

"You may believe what I'm tellin' you, Misther Honesty," answered Terry. "If you should ax her to marry you, I'm thinkin' she would jump at the chance, like a frog at a bit of red flannel."

"P'rhaps she may hev the chance, my boy, now that that young chap is got out of the way. Ef he wants to come back now, he won't be let to; so that p'int is settled. Thar's more ways than one of gittin' rid of a man when he is in the way. Ef red-skins can't do the work, white-skins ken do it. The gal shall hev a chance afore long, ef all things work right. I ain't much of an old man, though every body calls me old Honesty, and I've been powerful good-lookin' in my time."

"Handsome is, as handsome does, Misther Honesty. You are good-lookin' enough for a prince, this very day."

Wagg, who had been speaking in a musing way, as if talking to himself, continued in the same strain, without noticing the interruption of the Irishman, who eagerly drank in every word that the old man uttered.

"P'rhaps I shall ax the gal, and p'rhaps, ag'in, I shan't. P'rhaps I ken git her without axin', and ken take her whenever I want to. It would be the easiest way, I reckon; but I'm bound to git her any how; and then, ef she wants money and sech things, we will be sure to hev enough atween us. But I must make a clearance of the old squaw. I wish I could git rid of her as easy as I got rid of that young cuss. Whar did you pick that feller up, my boy, and who is he?"

"Is it Misther Holston you're spakin' of sir? We found him in Virginny, but I don't know where he came from, or who he is, barrin' that his father was a British ossifer."

"You had better look out fur him. He bears a bad name, and comes of a bad stock. The Holstons were a bad set. They were high-minded, hard-headed and overbearin'—cuss 'em!—and they were mighty hard to kill. I mistrusted the

young chap when I fust saw him, 'cause he looked so much like the old 'un."

"Did you ever know any of Misther Holston's folks, sir?" eagerly inquired Terry.

"What's that? Was I talkin' about them? I once knew some folks of that name, and I didn't like the folks, and never have liked the name. Take another taste of this rum, my boy, and tell me your name, and where you came from."

The Irishman touched his lips to the cup, and Silas Wagg emptied it at a draught.

"My name is Finnerty," replied Terry, "and I am an Irishman from ould Ireland, where I was born, as I've been tould, though I might have been born in America if I had been mind, as my father was a squire, and had land of his own."

"I like the Irishmen," muttered Wagg. "I never yet saw an Irishman that I didn't like. I knew an Irishman once, when I was scoutin' fur the Britishers and guidin' them out in this kentry, who was one of the best chaps I ever got holt of. Many's the jolly bout we have had together, and many's the wild time when we have follered a fat trail, or laid low fur keel boats. His name was Costigan, and I reckon he came over with the Holstons. Leastways he was with 'em, actin as an ossifer's servant, or suthin' of the kind. When I opened out to him, and told him how I was goin' to take 'em into a trap among the Injuns, and how they would be wiped out, and how we would git the plunder, he jist jumped at it like a young red-skin at a rifle. But he wouldn't touch a ha'r of the old major's head. He was a good feller was Costigan, and I was e'enamost sorry when I had to git rid of him."

"What Holstons are those you are speakin' of?" incautiously inquired Terry. "Was one of 'em a British ossifer?"

"What are you talkin' about?" exclaimed Wagg, looking up with an air of bewilderment and surprise. "What was I sayin' about any Holstons? I didn't speak sech a word."

"I thought I heard you speakin' about Major Holston," persisted Terry.

"Major Perdition! You lie like an Injun! You must be drunk, young man, or crazy. Git out of my house! for you are as drunk as a beast. I beieve you have been stealin' some

of my rum. I've got to go and git a gal from the Injuns, and can't stay here botherin with you. Be off, I say !, for I want to lock up my house !"

Rather taken aback by the old man's sudden change of demeanor, Terry picked up Mrs. Boyd's bag of simples, and left the house as he was ordered to.

Instead of going directly home, he stationed himself behind a tree, and soon saw Silas Wagg come out. The old man fastened the door, which was furnished with a chain and padlock, and waddled off instantly toward the river. Terry started to follow him, but checked himself, and watched the uncertain steps of the retreating figure.

"Be jabbers !" muttered the Irishman, "he got out of his talkin' drunk, and into his angry drunk, mighty suddent. I wish I hadn't spoke a word to him at all when he was jabberin' about the Holstons ; but that rum of his had got into my head, and made it go 'round like a windmill. I would give all the buttons off my ould coat if I could remember every word he said. He wants to git Miss Mary for himself, and says he can have her wid askin' or widout it. I'm thinkin' he meant what he said, though the ould sinner was as drunk as a b'iled owl. I do believe that he knows somethin' about Misther Holston's folks, and who can tell what divilment he may have been up to ? If he had only talked a little longer, he might have told the whole story. If I knew where to find the young gintleman, I would hunt him up and tell him all I heard, and let him do the thinkin' to suit himself. I must tell Misthress Boyd what the ould thafe of the worruld said about Miss Mary. Any how, that rum was mighty good, and powerful strong."

CHAPTER X.

A STRANGE POWER.

THE feelings of Herbert Holston, on being so rudely expelled from the society of those with whom he had sought the western wilds, were, as may be imagined, far from pleasant. It was not that he feared for himself, or thought that he might possibly suffer for want of food or shelter; for he was "used to hunter's fare," and had been sufficiently practiced in border fighting and strategy to render him confident in his ability to guard himself against his dusky foes. All he asked, for his own protection and sustenance, was his rifle, his horse and his blankets. Thus equipped, he considered himself ready to travel any distance, and to face any peril.

His personal situation was of little consequence to him, except so far as it concerned Mary Boyd, whom he had learned to love with all the warmth of his ardent nature, and who, as he believed, had learned to love him in return, although she was so coy about confessing it. When he saw her torn away from her home, almost from his side, and carried off by the savages, and when he felt that he was powerless to save her, the feeling made him nearly frantic, and lent to his arm the vigor which decided the fight of the previous night in favor of the settlers.

In the morning, when the sun rose upon his passion, it had considerably cooled down, but there remained the firm determination that he would go and seek her, as soon as it was possible to follow the trail of her captors. It was the intention to take with him only John Jaffray, who was as surely born to be a hunter as his brother Luke was born to be a farmer, and who had been well exercised in woodland sports, and even in Indian warfare. With John's aid, he believed that he would be able to track the savages to some village or resting-place, where they would lie in wait, and practice cunning and strategy, until they could find an opportunity of recapturing the maiden. It did not appear to be a very feasible plan, but

it was the only one that could be formed, and it might be made to succeed, by the aid of boldness, skill, and good fortune.

Before, however, he could get a chance to put his plan into execution, Silas Wagg came upon the scene of the late conflict, and then ensued the discussion which ended in Holston's expulsion from the home and councils of the settlers. Naturally proud and high-spirited, it was difficult for the young man to endure calmly such uncalled-for insults, such unmerited ignominy; but he suppressed his passion, and turned away to save himself from an explosion.

He was not only hurt at being shut out from the companionship of those who were so closely connected with Mary Boyd, but it was particularly irksome to him to think that such a man as Silas Wagg should have acted the part of either principal or agent in that transaction. He both despised and detested, most thoroughly, the pseudo landlord of the "Beechalt Tavern;" he believed that he had seen through him, and he had not been able to perceive, in the real nature of the man, any thing of the honesty, generosity and fair-dealing that were so conspicuous on the surface.

He knew, well enough, that Mark Jaffray and his father, knowing his affection for Mary Boyd, and being more than doubtful concerning her own feelings on the subject, would be glad to avail themselves of any plausible pretext to get rid of him, and that they would be ready enough to believe, in order to serve that purpose, any thing that Silas Wagg might say against him.

He knew, also, that Matthew Jaffray was a man who prided himself upon being "set" in his opinions, who considered himself infallible, who would follow his prejudices even in preference to his interests, and who would cling to those prejudices with the greater tenacity the more they were combated. Mark was "like unto him," with the additional motive of jealousy, and Holston knew that it would be useless to argue, or even to enter a protest, against their summary sentence of banishment.

It was with a proud and swelling heart, therefore, that he turned away from them, resolved to prosecute his search for Mary alone, as no other course was open to him. He first

went to the house, where he found Mrs. Boyd still lamenting the loss of her child.

"I have come to bid you good-by," he said, extending his hand.

"What do you mean?" earnestly asked the widow. "Where are you going, Mr. Holston? Do you mean to desert us, when we are surrounded by such perils?"

"Your brother and Silas Wagg say that I am the cause of the perils, that you would not have been molested by the savages if I had not built defenses for the house, and if I had not resisted them when they first attempted to enter."

"Do you believe that, Mr. Holston?"

"I do not. I should consider it an insult to my common sense to ask me to believe it. According to Silas Wagg, the natives of this region are mild, peaceable and inoffensive; but I have not yet seen any savages that were not savages. I have never seen, or heard of, an attack that appeared to be more clearly and deliberately planned with the intent to massacre. But I can have nothing more to say about it, as my voice has been excluded from their councils, and I have been expelled from among you."

"Is this possible? Has Matthew Jaffray gone crazy?"

"Crazy with prejudice, I fear."

"But you said that you were going to search for my child, and that you would endeavor to restore her to me."

"Silas Wagg assures your brother that he will negotiate with the Indians, and that he will not fail to bring her back."

"Do you believe he will?"

"I am inclined to believe that he is able to do so, if he wishes to. If he does bring her back, however, I am sure that it will only be to serve some purpose of his own. I will set out to seek her immediately, notwithstanding his promise, and will do my best, although I will be obliged to act alone. Good-by, dear lady."

"Good-by. May God bless you, and may God help us all!" replied the widow, retaining her grasp of Holston's hand, as if there were comfort and protection in it.

As the young man went through the wood, to the thicket where his horse had been concealed, he espied Sally, the

strange little maiden of the "Beehatch Tavern," gathering nuts under a tree.

Since he first saw her, he had taken a great interest in the lovely and melancholy child, and he now thought that his disturbed and bitter emotions might be soothed and sweetened by contact with her pure and simple nature.

He seated himself on the mossy turf, made her sit down by his side, took one of her hands in his, and gazed into her innocent eyes, as if he expected to find there both strength and consolation. She shuddered at first, but made no resistance, and looked into his face with a dreamy, listless, and fixed expression, that fascinated the young man very strangely.

He had not gazed at her long, when the child's eyelids began to droop, and soon they closed entirely, and her countenance assumed an appearance of profound repose.

"What is the matter, my dear little girl? Are you asleep?" asked Holston.

Instead of opening her eyes, the child commenced twitching nervously with her fingers, and began to form letters of the deaf and dumb alphabet. In a few moments she had spelt out the following sentence:

"You want to know about the pretty lady—about Mary?"

"I do, indeed," answered Holston, who was utterly bewildered. "Do you know any thing about her? Where is she?"

"She is safe. She is on the other side of the river, in the cave," was rapidly spelt out.

"In what cave?"

"Where the white men are."

"Is she well? What is she doing?"

"She is well. An Indian woman takes care of her."

"Tell me where the cave is, that I may go and seek her."

"No use. You could do no good. She will come back. Uncle Silas will bring her. He will get her back from the men."

"Are you sure of that?"

"I know it. Do you want to find the horses? You had better hunt for them now."

"Where are they?"

"In a hollow, toward the west, near the river, not a day's

journey from here. There are few to guard them. Follow the trail, and you will find them. Let me go."

"This is very strange!" exclaimed Holston. "I do believe the child is asleep. What is the matter with you? Wake up!"

As he shook her violently, she opened her eyes, and stared wildly about.

"What is the matter?" she asked, in her dumb language. "Have I been asleep? My head aches. I must go to the spring and get some cold water."

And she arose and unsteadily walked away.

Holston paused and pondered for a few moments. He did not pretend to inquire into the nature of the mysterious phenomenon that had come under his notice, or to ask how it happened that the child had gone to sleep—and yet not to sleep—under the influence of his eyes; but he wondered whether it was possible that this strange little girl, apparently so simple and so innocent, could have been used as a tool by Silas Wagg, for the purpose of deceiving him, of inducing him to abandon his search for Mary Boyd, and of leading him into some ambuscade, where he might be murdered by the savages.

Unable to decide this question by the aid of reason, he acted on impulse, and his impulse was favorable to the truth and innocence of the child.

Following this impulse, the young man shouldered his rifle, and walked away from the spot where he had witnessed the strange manifestations, fully determined to obey the advice of the girl, and to seek the stolen horses as she had told him to.

He had not gone far, when he saw Terry Finnerty, carrying a bag on his arm. The Irishman, who had just crossed the creek, caught sight of Holston at the same moment, called to him, and approached him as rapidly as he could walk. Holston stopped, and waited for the serving man under the trees.

"Is it yourself, Mr. Holston?" exclaimed Terry as he came up, with an eager expression on his flushed face. "I'm as glad to meet you as if I had found a purse of gould. I was wishin' jist a little bit ago, that I knew where you had gone

to, so that I might hunt you up, and here I find you without lookin' or tryin'."

"What is the matter Terry?" asked the young gentleman. "You seem much excited about something, and I believe you have been drinking; you have, for I can smell it in your breath. Where did you get the liquor?"

"It's nothin' out of the way that I've been drinkin', sir, and I found out somethin' by the manes of it, which I want to tell you, sir."

"You have been tapping old Silas Wagg's rum-barrel, I suppose. Tell me what you have heard, Terry; many strange things are happening about here, and I want to learn as much as I can concerning them."

"There you are, Misther Holston, and what I'm wantin' to tell you is one of the strangest. I was needin' somethin' to mend the hole in my shoulther wid, and so was all the rest of us, more by token; and Misthress Boyd sent me over to the ould sinner's to git this bag which she had left there; and I knew that a drop of his rum would do me a power of good, and I thought I could git it from him by abusin' you a bit."

"You did, you rascal? I suppose you gave me a bad enough character, if there was rum to be made by it. You are a sharp-witted fellow, Terry, and I have no doubt you touched the old man's feelings in the right way."

"I did, indade, sir. So we got to drinkin' thegither, though he was more than half-drunk when I commenced, and I only took a taste or two, because I wanted to hear him talk. He spoke about Miss Mary, sir, and he said that she might have a chance to marry him afore long, now that you were out of the way, and that she would jump at the chance. He said that if you want to come back now, you won't be let to do it, for there's more ways than one of gittin' rid of a man."

"It has seemed to me, lately, that he has cast longing eyes upon that young lady, and I have no doubt that he thought that the first step to be taken was to get me out of the way. I hardly know which to wonder at most, his unparalleled impudence, or the successful manner in which he has played his part. What more did he say?"

"He said that may be he might ax Miss Mary to have him,

and may be he mightn't, for he could git her without axin', and could take her whenever he wanted to. He said he was bound to have her, and wished he could git rid of his old squaw as easy as he got rid of you, sir."

"He has not got rid of me yet, though I am obliged to confess that I hardly know what to do to defeat his plans. It is a shameful thing, and enough to make me lose confidence in human nature, that a man like Matthew Jaffray, who was born with common sense, and who has had so many years' experience in the world, should suffer himself to be so easily deceived by the loud-mouthed professions of a backwoods vagabond like Silas Wagg; for I verily believe that that old man is nothing but a robber and a villain. Are they pulling down the stockade, Terry?"

"Is it the posts you mane, sir? Indade they are, and there'll not be a sign of 'em left by nightfall."

"They are destroying their only means of defense, and will now be entirely at his mercy. If he should ask them to give up their rifles to him, I have no doubt that they would do so. If he suffers Mary to return, she will be no better off than if she was in captivity."

"He told me, sir, that he was goin' to git Miss Mary, and that he would be sure to bring her back to-day or to-morrow."

"I believe he will, for I have heard something else that makes me think so. Are you sure that he said all you have told me?"

"He did, indade, sir; and that wasn't all he said."

"What more?"

"He spoke about some Holston people, sir, as if he knew them well, and he said they were a hard set, mighty overbearin' and hard to kill, and that he mistrusted you when he first saw you, because you looked so much like the old un."

"Is it possible that he used such language? What could he have meant? I am afraid that you were drunk, Terry, and imagined these things."

"Drunk I was not, sir, though the liquor had got into my head a bit. I can't remember the very words, though I wish I could; but I know that he said just what I'm tellin' you, sir, or the likeness of it. He spoke about an Irishman that

he once knew, when he was scoutin' and guidin' for the Britishers out here, and he tould me that the Irishman, whose name was Costigan, was an ossifer's sarvant or somethin' of the kind, with the Holstons. Then he said somethin' about takin' some folks into a trap among the Injuns, and gittin' the plunder, and about Costigan not touchin' a hair of the ould Major's head. I axed him what Holstons he was speakin' about; but he got mad and shut me up in a hurry, tellin' me I was drunk, and driv me out of the house."

"It is certain that one of you was drunk, Terry, and I am afraid that you dreamed some of these things that you have told me," said Holston, who was really quite moved by the recital. "Still, there may be something in it, and I have no doubt that it might be true. You ought not to speak of this to any one else, except that you may tell Mrs. Boyd, alone, what the old scoundrel said about Mary. I will remain in the neighborhood, and will leave nothing undone that may secure the safety of all of you. You had better hasten home, and get your wound dressed, for all your strength may be needed."

Terry accordingly went in one direction, and Holston in another. The young gentleman was not prepared to believe all that had been told him, and his mind was so occupied by other matters, that the part of the Irishman's communication which seemed to relate to himself made little impression upon him, at the time.

CHAPTER XI.

WAGG MAKES ADVANCES.

SILAS WAGG, much as he had been overpowered by the quantity of liquor that he had drank, was somewhat sobered by the pointed question that Terry Finnerty asked concerning the Holstons. He at once perceived that he had been "talking in his cups," and doubtless feared that he had made some revelations which might prove injurious to himself or his plans.

When he had once discovered that he was drunk, he felt that it was necessary for him to endeavor to act as if he was sober. Consequently, with a strong effort of will, he charged the Irishman with having succumbed to his own weakness, denied that he had used the language that was imputed to him, and turned Terry out of doors as a drunken beast. This done, he seized a bucket of water, and poured its contents over his head, which he rubbed vigorously until he was almost exhausted by the exertion. He then shook himself like a dog and went out of the door, closing and carefully locking it behind him, and bent his course toward the river, without looking to the right or the left.

"I am far behind time, fur sartin'," he muttered, as he walked away quite briskly, steadying his steps with his stout staff. "I ought to have been off arter the gal more'n an hour ago. Who knows but Empson, or some of those cussed red-skins, mought hev been foolish enough to carry her off out of the way. They know better than to sarve me such a trick, but thar's no tellin' what they mought do. Cuss the rum! I believe it is gettin' the upper hand of me wuss and wuss every day, and it hurts me most when I hain't no business to touch it at all. I should hev been 'tendin to what I had to do, 'stead of drinkin' rum and blabbin' to that Irishman. Thar's no knowin' what I may hev let out to him; but he had better hold his tongue about it, or he won't hev any tongue to hold much longer. I reckon, though, that the easiest way is the best, and it will be easy enough to swear that the cussed fool was drunk and dreamin' and those folks will believe it. They won't be apt to misdoubt the word of Old Honesty, who is always so keerful to speak the adzact truth. When they see me bring back the gal to them, all safe and sound and as bloomin' as ever, they'll be ready enough to believe all I say. I wonder what's become of Sally this mornin'; that gal has been actin' kinder queer since those folks come; it's a good thing that she is dumb, though I reckon she don't know any thin' to hurt. I 'spect likely she is out in the woods somewhar, talkin' with the birds and the trees, as she says she likes to do."

Having settled these two points in his mind, the old man hastened onward, and soon reached the river, where he halted

and looked at the turbid water, and the abrupt bank of the opposite shore.

"I suppose I shall hev' to cross over," he said to himself. "I hate to do it, 'cause I don't feel very stiddy on my pins this mornin', and mought be apt to spill a heap of rum into the water; but thar's nothin' else to be done, as I see. I wish I had let the cussed rum alone."

As he was debating this question in his mind, he was surprised and gratified by seeing a pair of shoulders rise up from a clump of bushes near the bank, surmounted by a head and face with which he was well acquainted.

"Hello, Wiley!" he exclaimed. "What are you doin' over here?"

"Jest lookin' around a little," replied the individual who was addressed—a tall and lank man, with restless eyes and a furtive expression of countenance.

"You had better be keerful how you look around, for thar's one man about here, at least, who mought git a sight of you, and that would be apt to be bad fur all of us."

"You needn't be afeard fur me, cap'n. I reckon thar's nobody sharp enough to ketch sight of Sam Wiley, when he don't want to be seen. This here weasel ain't one of the sleepin' kind, cap'n."

"I know you are apt to keep your eyes open, but you've got no business to be over here, now-a-days, unless you are sent fur. I am glad to find you this mornin', though, 'cause it will save me the trouble and the resk of crossin' the river myself. Whar's Empson and Simms?"

"Over thar with the old chief."

"Are they drunk?"

"Kinder that way, but not more'n you are, I reckon."

"Is the gal thar, too?"

"Yes."

"I want you to go over and git her, and bring her here to me, right away."

"What's up now, cap'n? Things is goin' on mighty queer, somehow. 'Pears like you ain't totin' fa'r with us. We've had a heap of fuss with the Injuns already 'bout the gal. They come out so bad in the skrimmage, last night, that they were keen to keep her fur themselves."

"They had better not try to cut any of thar tricks with me. It was a bad skrimmage, I admit; but who would hev thought that the cusses would have fit so well, and that thar stockade would hev been so stout? The Injuns got a good lot of hosses, any how, and they ought not to complain. Besides, thar's more comin' to 'em, and the next time they try, they'll hev a sure thing, good enough to pay 'em fur all thar trouble."

"How so, cap'n?"

"You may tell 'em, I reckon, that I've got those white folks to pull down their stockade, and they're workin' at it now. 'Twon't be long afore every sign of defense about the house will be took away. Besides, one of the chaps was killed last night, and I made 'em run off another this mornin'."

"You're a keen un, cap'n."

"I reckon I know whar and how to hit, and I'm sartin that I have allers come out ahead, so fur. Ef the red-skins can't be satisfied with the chance that's afore 'em now, they must be out-and-out onreasonable. As fur us white folks, we know how we are goin' to get paid fur our trouble."

"What's to be done next, cap'n?"

"Ef things go on all right, as I don't doubt they will, I will let you know, and will tell you what to do and when to do it. Jist now, Wiley, I want you to go over the river, and git that gal, and bring her to me right away. I reckon, on second thoughts, that you needn't come back yourself, but may send the chief over with her. Be in a hurry, fur I have lost too much time already."

Wiley drew out a canoe from under some bushes near the bank, and paddled rapidly over the water, while Silas Wagg concealed himself, to await the return of the boat.

Nearly an hour had elapsed, when he saw the canoe push out from the other shore. As it approached, an Indian could be seen paddling at the bow, and a white woman seated at the stern.

"Thar she comes," muttered Wagg, with a grin of satisfaction. "I knew that none of 'em would try to play tricks with me, either white or red. I shall hev the fun of takin' her home, and gittin' the thanks and blessins of the hull crowd. I e'namost wish I hadn't promised to bring her back; but,

I did make the promise, and I reckon it's best to carry it out."

As the canoe touched the shore, the old man waddled down, and assisted Mary Boyd to get out upon the bank. He then spoke a few words, in an Indian dialect, to the savage, who grunted affirmatively, and again paddled across the river.

"Let me help you up the bank, my pretty gal," said Wagg, extending his fat hand to Mary.

"Thank you; I can help myself very well," she replied, as she ran nimbly up the acclivity.

The old man followed her, and soon stood by her side, puffing and grunting.

"You are as light-footed as a fawn, my dear," said he. "I am mighty glad to see that you warn't quite skeered to death by the Injuns."

"I was very much frightened," replied Mary, "and I have suffered greatly, though more in mind than in body. What has become of my mother? Are my uncle and my cousins alive?"

"They are all safe and sound, pretty gal, and are waitin' fur you. I told 'em that I would git you away from the Injuns, and would bring you back, and you see that I am doin' it."

"Take me to them immediately, I beg you, for it seems an age since I saw them, and I know that my mother is very anxious about me."

"Come along, then, my beauty, and I will take good keer of you. Old Honesty is known to be a man of his word, and he never goes ag'inst what he promises. When I said that your folks was all safe and sound, I didn't speak the adzact truth, fur Luke was shot dead by an arrer, and that young feller who calls himself Holston, has gone away, nobody knows whar."

"I knew that poor Luke was killed. What do you mean by saying that Mr. Holston has gone away? Why did he go? Perhaps he went to search for me."

"P'raps, agin, he didn't, though he bragged and cussed, and talked about doin suthin' of the kind. Better take my hand, pretty gal, as this path is tol'able rough."

"I can walk very well by myself," replied Mary, shrinking from her would-be protector.

"You do seem to git over the ground right peart. The truth about that young chap is, that he saw what harm he had been doin', and how he had got every body into a scrape, and he was told that his room would be more thought of than his company, about thar; so he jist shouldered his gun and trapezed off, as mad as a hornet."

"He was driven away, I suppose. What harm had he done?"

"Heaps of harm. He had been aggervatin' the Injuns, and showin' fight toward 'em, till they got awful riled, and wanted to massacre the hull crowd of you. He wouldn't let the folks foller my advice, and live in quiet and peaceability."

"I thought that we would all have been murdered, without a chance to defend ourselves, if it had not been for his care and skill."

"That's jest where you thought wrong."

"I can not believe that Herbert Holston would go away, and leave me a prisoner in the hands of the savages, without making an effort to find and rescue me."

"I told your folks, more'n once, that that young chap wasn't to be trusted, and now he has been found out. Do you reckon he really keers fur you? He jest wants to git a sheer of your money and old Matthew's. You could do a heap better than to take up with sech a feller as him, pretty gal."

"My name is Mary Boyd, sir. I suppose you would advise me to marry my cousin, Mark."

"P'raps I wouldn't adzactly say that, either. P'raps you mought find some older and stiddier-headed man, who is well settled in the kentry, who has got lots of land and other property, and who could take keer of you better'n any of those young slips."

"What do you mean, sir?" exclaimed Mary, stepping further away from her unpleasant companion. "I have no desire to find such a person."

"P'raps you hev'n't, jist now; but you've got sense enough to come to it, I reckon, when you see that it's fur the best. Do you s'pose that any of those young chaps could hev got you away from the Injuns, when you had been took and carried off, like I did?"

"Is it to you, sir, that I am indebted for my release? I would like to know how you effected it."

"Ef you mean to ax whether it was me who got you back, I hev only to say that it was, and nobody else could hev done it. The Injuns know me well, and are e'enamost allers wil-lin' to do any thin' I ax of 'em, 'cause I hev allers treated 'em right, and they hev found me to be an honest and fa'r-dealin' man. Your folks wouldn't hev been bothered, and you wouldn't hev been carried off, if they had minded me, and had quit aggervatin' and provokin' the Injuns. It was that young feller who calls himself Holston, who brought the red-skins down on you. But he is gone now, and the folks are tearin' down that cussed fort, and they will git along well enough arter this. When you git settled down, ef you want to find a raal good husband in these parts, you had better think over, kinder keerfully, what I've been sayin' to you."

"Let us walk faster," said Mary, who was somewhat frightened by the manner in which Wagg had spoken to her, and who was anxious to increase the distance between herself and the unpleasant old man. "I am troubled about my friends, and about other matters, and I am anxious to meet my mother as soon as possible."

"You needn't be in sech a cussed hurry, fur I won't hurt you," protested Wagg, puffing and grunting as he waddled after her.

Mary persisted, however, in walking quite rapidly, and they soon reached the log-house, where Matthew Jaffray, assisted by his son Mark, was still busily engaged in demolishing the stout stockade, and leveling the earth that had been thrown up around the posts. Holston and John Jaffray were not present.

All were rejoiced at seeing the young lady return in safety from her captivity, and Silas Wagg was overwhelmed by Matthew Jaffray and Mark, with thanks and praises for the signal service which he had rendered them. He did not fail to improve the occasion by boasting loudly of his honesty and 'ruth, and by persuading the settlers that they ought to follow his advice upon all occasions. Terry Finnerty looked at him rather quizzically, but said nothing.

As for Mary Boyd, she was perplexed by conflicting thoughts

and emotions. Although she did not place implicit confidence in what Wagg had told her concerning the departure of Holston, she was troubled by it, and took the first opportunity of seeking a private interview with her mother, whose account of the manner of the young man's leaving, and of the motives which induced him to leave, differed materially from that which had been given to her by the landlord of the "Bee-halt Tavern."

CHAPTER XII.

A MIDNIGHT SURPRISE.

As Holston, after his interviews with the dumb girl and Terry, walked rapidly through the forest, he caught sight of John Jaffray, who had slipped away from the councils and the labors of his elders, and, with his ready rifle in his hand, had gone to shoot some squirrels.

Holston called his name, and the youth came running up to him, and grasped his hand most cordially.

"I am right glad to see you," he said, "for I was afraid you had gone away. I left father and Mark as soon as I could, because I was so angry when they talked about you so, and treated you as they did, that I wasn't able to speak. As for that Silas Wagg, I must say that I hate him, whether it's Christian or not, and I don't think he is half as honest as he is always claiming to be. I verily believe that father and Mark have gone crazy about him."

"Perhaps you ought not to say so, John. I am sure that I would not wish to set you against your father and your brother, however unjustly they may have treated me."

"I like father and Mark well enough, but it makes me angry to think that that wheezing and puffing old wretch should presume to speak against a gentleman, as you are, Mr. Holston. It is downright shameful in him to blame you for having brought the Indians on us, when it is plain that they came there on purpose to kill us, and when I am sure that if we had made the stockade as you wanted to make it, and had

kept guard properly, we might have laughed at the Indians, and brother Luke would have been living now."

"It is not worth while to talk about that now, as it can't be helped. I called you because I have something to say to you."

"A great deal might be helped now, that won't be helped, for they are going to tear down the stockade and leave the house without any defense. If old Wagg should tell father to bury his rifle, I believe he would do it. I'm thinking, Mr. Holston, that you, if you go away from here and take care of yourself, will be the only one of us left alive after a few days, for we will all be found, some fine morning, with our throats cut."

"You may be certain that I will not go far away from you. I will remain here, or near here, at all events, until Mary Boyd is rescued and placed in safety."

"Ah! there it is again; father is set against you about her, too; but then, he is set in every idea he has, and one thing is as bad as another. It is useless for me to say a word to him, because he stops me immediately, telling me that I am too young to understand such things, and that I am impertinent. He treats me like a boy—just as if I couldn't shoot a rifle, or track a deer or a red-skin, better than either he or Mark. But I am talking to no use, I am afraid. What did you want to say to me, Mr. Holston?"

"I have just seen Sally, that strange little girl from Silas Wagg's."

"Indeed! I have been trying to get a look at her lately. You must teach me that alphabet as soon as you can, Mr. Holston, for I long to talk to her. Where is she?"

"She is gone now; she has been talking very strangely. I met her in the woods, and sat down for a moment to speak to her, but I had hardly looked at her, when she fell asleep, or seemed to. She then told me what I was thinking about, and, as you may suppose, it was about Mary Boyd. I asked her where Mary was, and she said that she was across the river, in a cave, with some white men; that she was guarded by an Indian woman, and that Silas Wagg would bring her back here in safety. She also said that I had better go and look for the horses; that I could find them in a hollow, less than a day's journey from here, near the river; that I could

find them by following the trail, and that there was but a small guard over them."

"Did she say all that with her fingers?" asked John.

"Yes; and she talked very rapidly."

"Mighty queer. What did you conclude to do about it?"

"I was inclined to doubt, at first, whether she had not been instructed by Silas Wagg to act and speak in that way, in order to prevent me from seeking Mary, or to lead me into some danger."

"Not a bit of fear of that. I am willing to wager my head that that girl is innocent as a new-born lamb. What did you conclude to do?"

"I concluded to go and look for the horses."

"Good! Just the conclusion I would have come to. And you want me to go with you, of course, and that's what you called me for. I am ready right away, without any further fixing. If father misses me, I don't care; I reckon he'll be glad enough to get his horses back. Lead on, Mr. Holston."

Holston mounted his own horse, and John took one from the thicket, and they set out on their errand immediately, guided by the vision of a little girl.

They found it easy enough to follow the course of the retreating savages—who had no reason to expect pursuit, and had taken no pains to hide their trail—until they came to a place where the band had divided, the greater part of them having gone across the river.

Acting under the instructions of the girl, they kept on down the river, in pursuit of the smaller party, and they were the more ready to follow her advice, as they could plainly see, from the hoof-marks in the turf and on the clay, that the horses were in the possession of this party.

As it had been nearly noon when they set out, night came on them before they had come in view of the objects of their pursuit; but the trail was "warm," and they knew that their only chance lay in overtaking their enemies while they were resting for the night; so they pushed on, watching the trail carefully, and keeping a good look-out ahead.

It was after midnight, to judge from the glimpses of the moon that they caught at intervals, when the keen eyes of

Holston caught sight of the light from a fire, and a thin cloud of smoke, that seemed to rise from a hollow a short distance beyond them.

John Jaffray noticed it at the same instant, and both dismounted and tied their horses to trees.

"She told the truth," whispered John. "There is the very place, just as she described it to you. I feel sure of the horses now."

Quietly and stealthily, holding their rifles ready for instant use, the two young men crept forward to the edge of the hollow, which was a beautiful spot affording a resting-place pleasant enough for any mortal.

Under the tall and pleasant trees, by the side of a rippling brook, were tethered six of the horses that had been stolen from the settlers, and near them lay, by the smoldering remains of a fire, five Indians, wrapped in their blankets, and stretched out in sleep. The fitful flashes of the fire, and the occasional gleams of moonlight, enabled the scouts to easily ascertain the number and strength of their enemies.

Crawling as close to the fire as they thought prudent, Holston covered the watcher with his rifle, John Jaffray selected one of the sleepers, and they both fired together.

Both bullets told, and both men, with a yell, rushed down the slope, and dispatched with their pistols two more of the savages, just as they were rising from the ground. The last one turned and fled, without stopping to inquire the fate of his companions.

Leaving the bodies of the red-men where they had fallen, the two friends loosed the horses, and led them up the slope, where they mounted their own animals and headed homeward.

"What do you think now?" asked John, when they had got fairly under way with their strings of led horses. "Don't you see that the girl told you the truth? We found the horses just where she said you should look for them, and found them just in the situation that she described to you."

"It is very strange," answered Holston. "I can't imagine how she knew where they were, or why she was willing to tell. I suppose we may conclude, now, that Mary will be brought back by Silas Wagg, though I am at a loss to know

why he should show his power in that way. I am afraid that he is only concealing some deeper design. However, I know that I shall fully believe, hereafter, whatever that little girl may say to me."

"I tell you, Mr. Holston," said John, very emphatically, "she sees things that we can't see, and hears things that we can't hear. She's too pretty to be a mortal, any how."

Being encumbered by their led horses, Holston and John did not reach the "settlement" until about the middle of the afternoon. When they rode up to the house, they found Silas Wagg, together with Matthew Jaffray and Mark, collected there, and gazing at them eagerly.

"Where have you been, my son?" asked the old settler.

"Been after your horses, father," curtly replied John.

"I am glad that you have brought them back, and I will forgive you, this time, for going away without leave. I hope you have had no trouble. We have leveled that abomination of a fortification, as you see, and we can now rest in safety. Friend Wagg remained with us last night, and we experienced no alarm whatever. Friend Wagg has also brought back my niece from the Indians, as he promised to do, and we are now again united, with the exception of your brother Luke, whom we hope to join in heaven hereafter."

"I'm thinking you may join him sooner than you expect to, if you keep going on in this way," replied John. "But that has nothing to do with dinner. We are tired and hungry, as we have been riding all day and all night, with nothing to eat."

"Alight from your horse, my son, and your aunt will prepare some refreshment for you."

Nothing was said to Holston, but he saw Mary Boyd looking out at him from the door, with an expression of interest and sympathy that he could well understand and appreciate.

"I would jest like to know," said Silas Wagg, "how it was that you got back these hosses, young man?"

John briefly related the story of the pursuit and recapture of the animals, and Old Honesty held up his hands in horror.

"More bloodshed! More fightin'! More aggervatin' of the Injuns!" he exclaimed. "Better a thousand times, young

man, that you had left them thar hosses whar you found 'em."

With a pish and a pshaw, John Jaffray dismounted, and Herbert Holston silently rode away.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE HEART OF THE MYSTERY.

It was with a sad and heavy heart, that Holston again turned away from the house which held all that was dear to him on earth. He was not only grieved at being deprived of Mary Boyd's companionship, of the light of her eyes, of the music of her voice; but it was painful, bitter, humiliating to feel that he had been excluded from her society by the arbitrary edict of two narrow-minded and prejudiced men, acting at the instigation of a person with whom they had lately become acquainted, and who, as Holston believed, was nothing less than a hypocrite and a rascal.

Nevertheless, it was certain that Silas Wagg had duly performed his promise with regard to Mary, that he had brought her back to her friends in safety, thereby proving to the settlers both his ability and his willingness to serve them. Why had he done this? Why had he not kept her, if she had really been in his power or under his control? Why, indeed, thought Holston, unless he had some other purpose to serve, unless he had some deeper design in view?

Holston could only conclude that Old Honesty was a very great and greedy rascal, who wanted to make a "clean sweep" of the whole settlement, or that he really was, as Matthew Jaffray believed him to be, an honest man. Having his own prejudices and opinions in the matter, he had no hesitation in adopting the former belief, and was obliged to admit that he could see no way to expose the designs of Wagg, however bloody or atrocious they might be.

He knew, for a certainty, that he was both tired and hungry, and that he would not be in a proper condition to undertake

any enterprise, until he could get some rest and refreshment. Leading his horse into the thickest part of the timber, he fastened him to a tree, leaving him liberty to pick up such scanty tufts of grass as he could find, and proceeded to stay his own appetite with some dried meat and cold corn bread that he had in his pocket. Having finished this poor repast, he wrapped himself in his blanket, and laid down under a tree to sleep.

It was night when he awoke, and it was the pale light of the moon, streaming down into his face, that awoke him. He arose from the ground, jumped up and down to throw off the chilly sensation that had crept over him, tied his blanket to his saddle, and walked slowly through the forest toward the river.

He had not gone far when he saw Sally Wagg, at a little distance from him, tripping lightly and airily in the same direction. He called her name and she instantly stopped and waited for him. As he drew near her, he perceived that she held in her hands some parti-colored feathers, such as he had seen, or thought he had seen, given to her by Wagg on two previous occasions. There could be no mistake about it now, and he was sure that he was not dreaming this time. He determined to find out what it meant.

"Where are you going with those feathers, my child?" he asked.

"Across the river," she answered, on her fingers.

"To what place?"

"To the cave."

"What do you mean to do with them?"

"To give them to the man."

"One of the white men?"

"Yes."

"Why do you give them to him?"

"I don't know."

"Who told you to give them to him?"

"Uncle Silas. Don't stop me, or he will be angry."

Holston started, and nervously grasped the hand of the child. A new light seemed to break in upon him suddenly. He recalled the precise words that Silas Wagg had used on two occasions. "Thar's the six white feathers, and the two

little 'uns." The precise number of the settlers, at that time, was six white men and two white women. Here was a coincidence, certainly. "Then give him these twelve blue 'uns." The settlers had been possessed, at that time, of just twelve horses. Here was another coincidence. Could it be that old Honesty was using those feathers, and that innocent and unsuspecting child, to communicate with his allies, and to inform them what booty he had waiting for them? Holston could make nothing of the "big red 'un, and the black 'un," but, as he was resolved to investigate the matter further, he took the feathers that the child then held in her hand, and examined them closely.

There were four large and two small white feathers tied together, and one large white one by itself. "The large feathers mean Matthew Jaffray, Mark, John and Terry," thought Holston, "and the two little ones mean Mrs. Boyd and Mary. The single white one may be intended for me, as I am separated from the rest of them. Here are eight blue ones. They now have eight horses, not counting mine. It seems to be a plain matter. Here is another big red one, and here is a black one again, but I can't make out their meaning. And here, too, is a large feather, broken in several places. Can that be intended to refer to the dismantled condition of my stockade?"

More than half convinced that he had penetrated the mystery of the feathers, Holston handed them back to the child.

"I am going with you," said he; "show me the way."

She hesitated at first; but, meeting the keen glance of Holston's eyes, she shuddered visibly, and signed for him to follow.

So she led the way, through the forest, and among the scattered growth of bushes beyond it, until the river was reached. Then she swiftly descended the bank, and seated herself in the bow of a small canoe, which had been lying under the overhanging foliage. Holston concealed his rifle behind a bush, and followed her, taking his position in the stern of the little boat.

Dexterously plying her paddle, she made the canoe move rapidly through the smooth water, and in a short time it

reached the other side of the river, where its bow grated upon the stones.

At this place the rocks rose up, almost from the edge of the river, like palisades, their rugged sides being relieved only here and there by stunted trees and patches of vegetation. The moon which was now slowly going down the western sky, threw the face of the cliffs into shade, but Holston could see, about half way up the acclivity, partly concealed by a mass of scrubby bushes and vines, an opening in the rock that looked like the mouth of a cave.

The girl stepped lightly out of the canoe, fastened it to a stone, and again paused and hesitated; but a glance from Holston was sufficient to set her in motion, and she commenced to climb the ascent with such lightness and activity that the young man found it difficult to keep up with her.

When she had nearly reached the opening in the rock, she stopped and waved her hand back to Holston, as if to intimate that he should go no further. He waited until she had disappeared within the cave, and then followed her, as cautiously and as silently as he could.

When he reached the hole, he was surprised to see that it was almost large enough for a man to enter while standing upright. It ran back into the hill for a considerable distance, and grew wider and higher as it receded from the entrance. A light, either from torches or a fire, illuminated the interior, but could not be seen from without.

Crouching down by the rough side of the opening, Holston carefully worked his way along, until he reached a projecting rock, from behind which he could both see and hear what was passing in the cave. Availing himself of this shelter, he took a survey of the strange den and its occupants.

The opening spread out into a rather lofty and irregular room, in the middle of which a large fire of pine-knots was blazing, filling the whole interior with a lurid light, and sending dense clouds of smoke up to the dark roof. Near the fire were seated three rough and uncouth white men and a powerfully formed and painted Indian.

To one of the white men, who seemed to act as the leader of the others, the child advanced, and gave him the feathers which she had brought.

"Here you are ag'in, little 'un," said the man, as he took the symbols. "How is that honest and fa'r-dealin' old coor, Mr. Silas Wagg? Hope you have brought us some kind of a sartinty this time. It's a mighty good thing you are dumb, fur I reckon you could tell a power of things ef you were able to talk. You may go back into the other end of the place, little gal, and see ef you can't find suthin' to eat, as your sharp ears might pick up a leetle too much about here."

The child walked away, and the man examined the feathers.

"So thar's only four white men to fight ag'inst now," he said. "Wal, we can manage them easy enough. They've got eight hosses yit, 'cordin' to what the feathers say. Ef that's so, they must have took some of 'em back, 'cause the Injuns said they carried off nine or ten. Here's a big red un, that means money—jest what we all want, boys, and what were bound to git; and this black un means that we must go to work to-morrer night. This white feather, all to itself; means that they have kicked out that other chap, the one old Silas was so much afeared of, and that he's goin' about on his own hook. But this broken feather is the best of all, as it tells us that they have pulled down the fort that bothered us so much the night afore last, and all we've got to do is jest to go over and take 'em as we want 'em. He must have got hold of a lot of fools, or they wouldn't have pulled down those posts, that were the only fence between them and eternity. Wal, boys, we can let the little un go and tell him that it's all right, I reckon. Wiley, as it takes you so long to git started, you and Simms must look arter that chap who is goin' around loose, and the Wild Cat and I will bring the red-skins down on the others. We will go to work 'arly to-morrer night, 'cause the sooner the job is done, the better."

Having learned all that he wished to know, Holston would gladly have withdrawn; but in turning to do so he stumbled against a stone, and fell. Instantly the Indian sprang toward the entrance, followed by the white men. There was a brief struggle, which ended in Holston being bound and carried inside, where he was laid down near the fire.

As he lay there the child passed by him, going out of the cave. He looked at her, but she only shuddered, averted her eyes, and hurriedly walked away.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SERIOUS DIVISION.

It was with no small degree of mortification that Holston found himself a prisoner in the hands of the very men whose designs he had just discovered. He had penetrated the heart of Silas Wagg's mystery, and had laid bare his plans against the lives and property of the deluded whites whom that worthy had taken under his special protection; but the knowledge was to avail him nothing, as he had been immediately deprived of the power of using it.

He was now convinced that he had rightly suspected, all along, the true character of Old Honesty, and that he had not given him credit for a whit more hypocrisy, rascality and cruelty than he really possessed. He saw that Wagg was in fact an ally of the bands of marauding Indians, led by still worse white men, who infested that part of the country, and that he had only pretended friendship for Matthew Jaffray and his family in order that he might retain them in that spot and put them in such a defenseless position that they would fall an easy prey to the savages, both white and red. He perceived how easily and naturally the prejudices of Matthew Jaffray had been worked upon, until he had been led completely into the snare, and what a subtle policy Wagg had shown in the restoration of Mary Boyd, whereby he had lulled the suspicions that might have been engendered by the night attack of the Indians, and had thoroughly convinced Matthew and Mark of his willingness and ability to serve them. He saw all this plainly enough now, but he might as well have been mentally blind, for he was effectually deprived of the power of using the knowledge he had gained.

He longed to be free, that he might go and openly denounce Wagg to those whom he was betraying to their death, that he might visit upon his guilty head the punishment due to his crimes. But his heart sank within him again, as he reflected that he could bring no evidence but his own

unsupported word, and as he felt how useless it would be for him to attempt to overcome the prejudices of Matthew Jaffray and his jealous son Mark.

Besides, even if he were free, and even if he could convince his former friends that they had been betrayed, how could he hope to avert the impending evil? The stockade had been torn down, and there would be no time to build another before the threatened attack would be made, so that they were almost defenseless. They might seek safety in flight, but it was highly probable that they would be overtaken and routed before they could get far. Look at it in any light he could, it appeared to be a desperate if not a hopeless case, and he could only wish that he might be free, able to strike a blow for her he loved, and to die in her defense.

"So, my fine young bird, you've come around here sneakin' and spyin' and have got yourself cotched," said the man who appeared to be the leader of those in the cave.

Holston looked at him, but made no reply, as he knew that it would be useless to bandy words with the ruffians.

"Did you foller the little gal over, young chap?"

Holston did not answer.

"Reckon you're the sassy customer that the old man was speakin' about—that he wanted to git out of the way, ain't you, now? Didn't you come along with those settlers across the river?"

Still the young man disdained to reply.

"You won't answer, hey? Wal, it makes no manner of difference, as we know all about you, and as we know jest what to do with you. You needn't talk unless you want to, and you won't have a chance to talk much longer, as we mean to slit your gullet fur you. Whatever you might be, you've heard entirely too much in this place fur us to let you git away alive, and you may jest make up your mind that you'll never see daylight ag'in outside of this here hole."

Holston turned over on his side, and closed his eyes, as if he was enarely indifferent to the questions that had been asked him, or the threats that had been made against him.

"Wal, he's a cool hand," said the man; "I reckon we had better keep him, boys, till the old man can take a look at him and say what he wants to do with him. Wiley, the job I

told you and Simms to attend to is done for you already; so that's off your mind. Let's take a drop or two of rum all around, and then we will try to git some sleep."

The occupants of the cave helped themselves liberally to the rum, which was contained in a small cask, and then the three white men laid down to sleep, leaving the Indian to keep watch over the prisoner. The Indian, however, having had a taste of the rum, was not disposed to be content with so little, but surreptitiously filled his tin cup at the cask, and emptied it down his throat. Again he accomplished the same maneuver, and soon it became evident that the liquor was too potent for his brain, for he sat down on the stone floor, then fell over, and sunk in a slumber more profound than that of his fellows.

Holston sighed as he looked at the sleeping men, and thought of his own bound and helpless condition. If he was only free, how easily he might escape from their custody! He rolled himself over with some difficulty, until he reached the rocks at the opening, where he vainly endeavored to cut his bonds by rubbing them against the sharp edge of a stone.

"Why does that child act so strangely toward me?" he muttered. "Why did she pass me by without noticing me, when she saw me lying bound and helpless? I wish she would come here now; I *do* wish she would come here now!"

He had hardly given utterance to the thought, when there was a light step in the opening of the cave, and in a moment the very person for whom he had been wishing appeared at his side.

She came in like a spirit, and she looked like a spirit, as she hovered over the prostrate man and looked down upon him. Then she knelt, drew his own knife from his belt, cut the cords that bound his hands and foot, and beckoned to him to follow her, placing one finger upon her lips to enjoin silence.

The young man needed no caution, for he now appreciated the value of liberty too well to be willing to throw it away again. He stepped out through the opening over the rough stones, as noiselessly as if he had been treading on velvet and followed his little guide down the deep descent, until they reached the river, where the canoe was still moored.

They entered the boat, Sally again seated herself in the bow with the paddle, and the light craft, swiftly cutting its way through the quiet water, landed them safely on the other shore.

When they reached the Kentucky side of the river, and Sally had moored the canoe in its proper place, he was not slow to express his gratitude for the signal service she had rendered him, in delivering him from the power of the ruffians in the cave.

"Why did you come to my assistance?" he asked.

"You made me come," she timidly answered, on her fingers.

"What do you mean? How did I *make* you come to me?"

"You would not let me go away; you called me, and made me come to you."

Leaving the young man to speculate concerning the meaning of this strange answer, she bounded away, and was soon out of sight in the forest.

Strange as were the actions and expressions of the child, Holston had no time to ponder over them, for it was now daylight, and he knew that every moment was precious, if he would do any thing toward saving the lives and liberty of the settlers.

Taking his rifle from its place of concealment, he hastened to the thicket where he had left his horse. After making a scanty luncheon on the remainder of his dried meat and cold bread, he mounted, and rode toward Matthew Jaffray's log-house.

As he went, he meditated on the perils that surrounded Mary Boyd and her relatives, and endeavored to form some plan by which they might be extricated from their dangerous position. The more he thought of it, the more gloomy and doubtful the prospect appeared, and he could see no hope of safety except in hurried flight, to which it was not at all probable that Matthew Jaffray would consent.

Suddenly an idea dawned upon him, like an inspiration. His countenance brightened, his eyes flashed, and he urged his horse to greater speed. If he had not discovered a means by which the safety of the settlers could be insured, he had at least formed a resolution, which he was determined to carry out in spite of all opposition.

He reached the log-house shortly after sunrise. Matthew Jaffray and his son John were at work in front of the house. The former seemed to be much surprised and displeased at the return of the young man. Without paying any attention to his frowns and sour looks, Holston dismounted, tied his horse to a tree, and walked toward the door.

"What do you want here?" said the old man, placing himself in his way. "You have been plainly told that your presence is not desired here, and it is discourteous, to say the least, to thrust yourself among us again."

"This is no time to speak of courtesy," sternly answered Holston; "I have come upon a matter of life or death, and I have that to say to you all, which will admit of no delay."

"What do you mean? If you have any thing to say, let it be said to me."

"Follow me, and you shall hear it," replied the young man, pushing by him, and entering the house.

There he found Mark and Terry, together with Mary Boyd and her mother. Mary uttered a joyful exclamation as she saw him, which confirmed him in the resolution that he had made.

"I have come to tell you," said he, "that your lives are in danger, and that you will all be inevitably murdered, or carried into a captivity that is worse than death, unless you immediately escape from this place. I have come to tell you, Matthew Jaffray, that your very honest and generous friend, Silas Wagg, is one of the greatest rascals unhung; that he is chief of a band of white desperadoes, who are allied with the savages; that he has kept you here, and has rendered you entirely defenseless, in order that you may fall an easy prey to the white and red scoundrels, who intend to attack you again this very night, and who intend to massacre all of you except Mrs. Boyd and Mary."

"We have heard enough, young man," said Matthew Jaffray. "Leave us, you meddlesome mischief-maker; our only troubles have been caused by you, and since you left us we have been living in peace and safety, under the protection of honest friend Wagg."

"It is such protection as the wolf gives to the lamb. I

will not leave until I have fulfilled my duty, and you must hear me out."

The young man then proceeded to give an account of the circumstances connected with the two previous feather messages, of his visit to the cave with Sally, of the conversation that he overheard there, of his capture and his subsequent deliverance. He concluded by avowing his belief that the attack would be made as soon as possible after his escape was discovered, and that they had no time to lose in seeking a place of safety.

"What sort of a wild and improbable tale is this?" said Mark Jaffray, with a sneer. "Either you are crazy, or you have devised a cunningly-concocted story in the hope of deceiving us. You need not think that we will believe such nonsense.

"But you *must* believe it, for it is true!" exclaimed Mary Boyd, starting forward in great excitement. "I saw those very men in the cave to which I was taken, and I heard them speaking of the feather that the old man had sent, and I heard them say that the little white feather was to belong to the old man; I heard other expressions which I considered of no consequence at the time, but I understand them now, and I know that Mr. Holston has spoken the truth. My mother and I will go with you, Herbert, for we will not stay here to meet with a fate that is worse than death."

"Can you take us to a place of safety, or can we find safety in flight?" asked Mrs. Boyd.

"I can not promise you absolute safety," answered Holston; "but I will take you to a place where I can defend you, to the only place that offers any possible refuge."

"We will go with you," said the widow, in a firm and decided tone. "Let us start immediately."

"I'm after goin' with yez, too, Misther Holston," said Terry Finnerty. "Me leg is bad, but it don't hindher me shootin' at all."

"Come with us, father and Mark, for I shall follow Mr. Holston," entreated John Jaffray; "I believe that he has told us the truth, and I am sure there is no safety in this place. We would do wrong to stay here to be slaughtered. Come with us, and let us act together."

"You are going to your destruction, and a judgment will surely overtake you if you follow that young mad-cap," said the old man. "I will remain here, trusting in Providence and in our good friend, Silas Wagg."

The women were placed upon the horses belonging to Holston and John, and the seceding party set out across the prairie.

"You had better return, son John," screamed Matthew Jaffray; "you had better return, sister and niece! If you go with that outcast youth, I wash my hands of your blood, and cast you off for ever."

His appeal was fruitless, and they went, as Lot went from Sodom, without looking back.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BATTLE OF THE BLOCK-HOUSE.

"WHERE are you going to take us to, Mr. Holston?" earnestly asked Mrs. Boyd, when the small party reached the stream that separated the settler's tract from Wagg's "Beech Tavern."

"I hope and believe that I am taking you to a place of safety," answered the young man. "I think I have as much confidence in the protecting care of Providence as any person may have, but we would not be justified in omitting to make use of the means which have been placed in our hands for our own preservation. I am sorry that Mr. Jaffray and Mark are so obstinate and wrong-headed, for I know that Silas Wagg is a heartless and hypocritical scoundrel; but it would be useless to argue with them, and it is our duty to take care of ourselves. Let us hasten on, for the storm may burst sooner than I had expected."

"I think I know where you are going, Mr. Holston, and your idea is a good one," said John Jaffray, as he led the widow's horse into the water.

After fording the stream, the party went straightway to the

"Beehalt Tavern," where the women were dismounted, and the horses were left in charge of Terry.

As Holston stepped to the door of Wagg's house it was opened, and he was confronted by the landlord himself, whose frowsy and dishevelled appearance indicated that he had been sleeping very late.

"What do you want?" he asked in astonishment.

"We have come to claim your protection and a shelter," ironically replied the young man.

"I reckon you're welcome," stammered Wagg; "some of you, in coorse are welcome, but—"

Before he could finish the sentence, he was seized and thrown down by Holston, who, with the assistance of John Jaffray, securely bound his hands and feet. They then carried him into the "tavern," and laid him upon his couch, in spite of his struggles and imprecations.

"What do you mean by this, you young rascal?" exclaimed Old Honesty, who was foaming with rage; "what are you tyin' me up in my own house fur? Do you want to rob me?"

"It means that you are found out, you hypocritical old scoundrel," replied Holston; "it means that we know all about your plans to get us murdered and to take possession of our women. It means that we know that you are in partnership with the Indians and white men over the river, who intend to come and slaughter us to-night. It means that I understand the white feathers and the blue feathers, and the red, black and broken feathers. It means that I have been over there in the cave, and have learned all this and more. It means that we intend to use this building as a block-house, and to fight for our lives here, and that you will not be allowed to prevent us."

Unheeding the curses and fearful threats of the old man, Holston searched his pockets until he found a key, with which he unlocked the trap door, and sent Mrs. Boyd and Mary up into the second story. He then directed John to take the horses into the woods and conceal them, and proceeded to make preparations for a siege.

He first rummaged the apartment, and found an abundance of corn meal and bacon. He then built a fire in the fire-

place, called Mrs. Boyd down from above and set her at work to cook "rations" enough to last them two or three days. The dumb girl, who had watched these proceedings with astonishment not unmixed with fear, was taken in charge by Mary, who soon soothed and pacified her. The old Indian woman sat in a corner, nearly covered with blankets, mumbling inarticulate nonsense, and no one took any notice of her.

When John Jaffray returned from taking care of the horses, Holston proceeded to inspect the material of war with which the "Bechalt Tavern" was supplied. He caused all the rifles, muskets, pistols, and powder-horns to be carried up-stairs, and went to the second story himself, to make his defensive arrangements. He found the walls of the second story, as he had expected to find them, perforated with loopholes, which had been temporarily stopped up with blocks of wood. He took out the blocks, and opened the heavy oaken shutters in the sides, thus giving the fortress plenty of light and air, and affording a good view of the surrounding country.

Examining the arms, Holston and his friends found themselves in possession of twelve rifles and muskets, all in good order, and half a dozen pistols. They loaded them carefully, and instructed Mary Boyd and her mother in the art of loading them, so that the women might be made useful in case of emergency. They also found a keg of powder, a keg of bullets, and a keg of buckshot.

Being thus provided with arms, ammunition and provisions, Holston declared that they were equal to a dozen men, and that they were able to stand a siege, for two or three days at least, whatever force their enemies might bring against them.

By the time these preparations were completed it was considerably past the hour of noon, and the warlike occupants of the "Bechalt Tavern" were not disposed to forget their dinner. After the provisions were carried up-stairs, and a portion had been left for the old Indian woman, Holston locked the door of the lower story, and put the key in his pocket, and all partook of the corn bread and bacon with a relish that was increased by their feeling of security.

This important duty performed, John Jaffray took a spy-glass, which they had found in the course of their rummaging, and looked toward the log-house.

"Father and Mark are there still," said he; "they are chopping wood in front of the house. I wish they had come with us; if they were here we would all be safe. I must go, Mr. Holston, and again try to persuade them to join us. Oh, no! it is too late now, for I see Indians in the edge of the wood, and there goes a flight of arrows at the house, and I hear musket shots. They have taken the alarm now. Mr. Holston and Aunt Martha, they see their danger, and have commenced to run in this direction, but the plain is covered with Indians who are chasing them. Do you hear those yells?"

All heard them, and all rushed to the openings. Matthew Jaffray and his eldest son had, indeed, seen their danger at that late hour, and they knew that they had no chance of escape, but in instant flight. Not being able to reach their horses, they were compelled to make the race on foot, and they shaped their course for the "Beehatch Tavern." After them nearly a hundred Indians poured out from the woods in hot pursuit, shooting and yelling as they went.

The white men ran well, knowing that their only hope of life lay in the swiftness of their feet, but many of the Indian runners gained upon them rapidly, and their arrows fell very near the fugitives. They gained the stream, dashed boldly through the water, and reached the other side in safety, but, as they were ascending the bank, Mark was struck by two arrows, and fell to the ground, mortally wounded. The old man stopped for a moment, long enough to see that his son was past help, and then, with redoubled speed, pressed on toward the block-house. Holston, John and Terry, with their rifles at the loopholes, waited anxiously until the pursuers came within range, and then fired. Two of the Indians dropped, and the others were momentarily astonished at this unexpected reception, but they soon pressed on after the almost exhausted old man. After another volley from the loopholes, Holston hastened down-stairs, and opened the door, just in time to admit Matthew Jaffray, and to dispatch with his pistol a painted warrior, whose hatchet was raised over the head of the fugitive.

"You were right, and I was wrong; I can never forgive myself," said the old man, as his preserver locked and barred the door.

"We have no time to speak of that now," answered Holston. "Get up-stairs as soon as you can, and you will see how easily we can beat off the red rascals."

After being revived by a drink of Silas Wagg's rum, Matthew Jaffray took a rifle, and stationed himself at a loop-hole.

The Indians, a portion of whom had stopped to ransack the log-house, came on in a body, led by the three white men whom Holston had seen at the cavern. They advanced to the attack in a very brave and spirited manner; but the men in the block-house, being plentifully supplied with loaded muskets and rifles, kept up such a close and incessant fire from behind the wooden walls, that their assailants soon fell back in confusion, with a considerable loss in killed and wounded. Again they were brought to the assault, again they were effectually repulsed, and then they postponed further operations until night. Night came, but it did not aid them, for the moon came with it. Another attack met with a signal failure, their bravest men being unable to reach the block-house in the face of the deadly fire from the loop-holes.

The besieged were congratulating themselves upon their success, and upon their impregnable position, when they were startled by a heavy crash above them, as of some heavy body falling upon the roof. Another and another followed, and the cracking and breaking of the timber could be plainly heard, accompanied by savage yells of triumph.

"They have mounted the hill behind us, and are throwing down rocks upon the house," said Holston. "If this continues, we will surely be crushed out, and I must confess that I don't know how to put a stop to it."

A brief silence was followed by another crash, and that by another and another, the fall of the huge boulders producing an almost deafening noise, and shaking the stout log-house from the top to the bottom. Soon a stone of unusual size thundered down, and the falling of timbers, and the heavy jar of the stone as it dropped on the logs above them, told the defenders that the roof had been broken through. The savages redoubled their yells, and continued to pour down the heavy stones.

"We must not remain here," said Holston, "for they may break through the upper floor at any moment. Go downstairs, all of you, and I will endeavor to arrange all these boxes and barrels so as to break the force of the blows as much as possible."

All went down the ladder, as the young man directed, with the exception of Mary Boyd, who lingered behind, looking out through a loop-hole.

Suddenly she shrieked, but it was a shriek of joy. Stepping to one of the windows, she threw open the shutter, and, with outstretched arm and flashing eyes, pointed across the plain.

"Herbert! Mr. Holston!" she eagerly exclaimed, "help is coming to us! There is a large body of white people over the creek, and a party of mounted men is hastening here. Look out, and see how the Indians are flying in all directions."

But Holston's thoughts were otherwise employed. In moving a box, it had fallen and broken open, scattering its contents on the floor, and the quick eye of the young man had noticed a locket, which he had instantly picked up. It contained the portrait of a man, at which he was gazing so intently that Mary was obliged to speak to him again before he could comprehend her meaning. When he looked up, and understood that succor was at hand, there was a strange but joyful expression on his fine features.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed. "They could not have come at a better time."

He then announced the joyful news to those who had gone below, and directed them to unbolt the doors.

CHAPTER XVI.

REVELATIONS—CONCLUSION.

It has been stated that nobody took any notice of Silas Wagg, after he was bound and laid on his couch. Holston had locked the door of the lower apartment, so that the old outlaw might have, in any event, no chance to escape from the house, and so that he might not be troubled by him while he and his friends were meeting the attack of the Indians. After that time he had been too busily employed in fighting and working to give any thought to his prisoner.

The old Indian woman had been left in the lower room with her reputed husband, but had not been left there through neglect or inattention, for Holston considered that she had not sense enough to understand what was going on, or to thwart his plans in any particular.

Silas Wagg thought differently, and was of opinion that he might make the old creature useful in effecting his deliverance from his captors. He saw plainly that all had been found out. When Matthew Jaffray, confessing his error, sought refuge in the castle, Wagg felt that he was utterly lost unless he could make his escape, and his thoughts naturally turned to the question of his personal safety.

He spoke to the old woman, and besought her to come to his help, to cut the ropes with which he was tied, and to set him free; but she sat quietly in her corner, mumbling and muttering to herself, and paid no attention to him. He called her by every endearing epithet that he could teach his unaccustomed tongue to pronounce, imploring her to aid him, but she was deaf to all his entreaties. He commanded her, cursed her, and threatened her, swearing that he would take her life as soon as he was able to lift his hand; but his threats were as unavailing as his prayers. He told her that the white men up-stairs would kill her and take every thing that belonged to her; that her friends, the red-men, were outside, and that she had only to open the door and let them in; but she

still sat quietly in her corner, mumbling and muttering to herself.

Having exhausted every means of persuasion, Silas Wagg groaned heavily, and ceased to rage, only now and then bursting out into paroxysms that threatened to choke him.

The falling of the heavy stones on the roof, jarring every timber in the stout log-house, at length aroused the old woman from her lethargy. She threw off her blankets, rose to her feet, and glared wildly around, like a tigress that is surprised in her den. Another and another tremendous shock followed, and she danced excitedly about the room, chanting some barbarous Indian song. Old Honesty took advantage of this moment to beg her to bring a knife and liberate him from his bonds.

She snatched a hunting-knife from the floor, and approached him with gleaming eyes and frenzied looks.

"Owl-eye is the daughter of a chief," she exclaimed. "She is ready to die, and she can sing her death-song as bravely as any warrior. Can the Old Fox say as much? Did he think the daughter of a chief had no ears—that she could not hear? Did he think she had no eyes, that she could not see? Owl-eye can see in the night, better than in the daytime, and her ears have been sharp enough to hear the words that the Old Fox has spoken in his sleep. She knows that he calls Owl-eye old and ugly, and that he says the Great Spirit has taken away her mind. She knows, too, that he has set his eyes on a girl with a white skin, and that he means to make her his squaw, and to drive Owl-eye from his lodge. The white girl may live, for she hates him, but the Old Fox must die!"

With a horrible screech, she jumped upon him and plunged the knife deep into his breast. Wagg yelled with agony, and fell back on his couch.

The woman would have repeated the blow, had she not been seized by Matthew Jaffray, who came down the ladder at that moment, with his son John. The old man held her, while John opened the door to admit the white men outside, who had just reached the house.

The party proved to be a portion of a large body of Virginia emigrants, who had banded themselves together for

mutual protection, and who, on reaching the vicinity of the 'Beechalt Tavern,' had been attracted by the noise of firing.

While Matthew Jaffray and John were explaining to them the situation of affairs, Holston came rapidly down the ladder. He held in his hand the locket that he had found, and was greatly excited. Hastening to where Wagg was stretched out, he knelt by his side, and held the locket up before his eyes.

"Whose picture is that?" he exclaimed. "Where did you get it? Tell me quickly!"

"Won't you kill me if I do tell you?" gasped Wagg.

"I will not, if you tell me all, and tell me truly."

"It was a British ossifer. I was actin' as guide fur him, when he was killed by the Injuns."

"What was his name?"

"His name was Major Holston. I was afraid he mought be some kin to you. That's his little gal. Sally is his little gal. I've took keer of her. She wasn't dumb afore her mother was killed."

"Oh, God!" exclaimed Holston, "hold my hand from executing thy vengeance upon this most infernal villain!"

As if an angel had answered his prayer, Mary Boyd thrust the dumb child between him and the wounded man. With a sudden revulsion of feeling, he turned, covered the little girl with caresses, and burst into tears.

All present were affected, and none more so than Matthew Jaffray, who sought that opportunity to ask pardon of the young man for the wrong he had done him.

"That is already forgiven," answered Holston. "If you have done wrong, you have harmed yourself more than me, and you have suffered terribly for it."

When the excitement subsided, it was ascertained that the Indians had been dispersed, and two of their white leaders captured. After a brief and summary trial, the result of which was settled before it commenced, the white men were hung together upon one tree, thus partially expiating their unknown and unnumbered crimes.

Silas Wagg lingered for two days, and then died in great agony. Before he died he made further revelations, and papers and other articles were found among his effects which

confirmed what he said in regard to Holston's family and little Sarah.

The greater part of the emigrants concluded to remain in that vicinity, and an extensive settlement was soon established there. The Indians, after the signal defeat they had sustained, seldom molested the neighborhood, and their incursions were easily repelled.

It was agreed that the "Beehalt Tavern" and all that was in it belonged of right to Herbert Holston, who was soon united, with the consent of her mother and her uncle, to Mary Boyd, and became a prominent man in the country.

Sarah Holston found a pleasant home with her brother and his wife, and grew in beauty and intelligence as she grew in years. She was not yet seventeen when John Jaffray, who had lost no opportunity of practicing the deaf and dumb alphabet with her, asked her brother if he might have her for his wife.

"What will you do with a dumb wife?" playfully inquired Holston.

"If you could understand, as well as I do, every thing she says with her eyes, you wouldn't ask such a question," replied John.

Being mated, they were matched accordingly.

The old Indian woman, who had become idiotic, wandered about the settlement, and was charitably cared for until she died.

The "Beehalt Tavern" has been razed to the ground, and a pretentious "hotel" has been erected near the spot on which it stood.

THE END.

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